THE UN-REDD PROGRAMME FOR CONSERVING TROPICAL RAINFORESTS IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

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15 Feb, 2023

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Outline

1. Summary of the paper
2. Overall assessment and contribution
3. Channels and story
4. Anticipation
5. Power and data

The problem

"every program that is implemented as a good idea to be applied, rather than a good hypothesis to be evaluated, is a missed opportunity to learn.

In conservation science and practice, it's been mostly missed opportunities. We can do better."

Paul Ferraro (2018, pg. 165)

Summary of the paper

- Land related emissions are about quarter of all, and deforestation a main contributor
- PNG = 3% of global deforestation, 2001–2021
- Around 0.1% of world population; 0.3% of land area
- Some provinces lost 50 percent of tree cover since ’00
- REDD plus: huge area, limited credible evidence on what works to reduce deforestation, incl PBR/RBF

This paper $\Rightarrow$ use **remote-sensing data on tree cover change** to estimate the dynamic effects of **subnational REDD plus agreements** on deforestation

Overall assessment and contribution

New evidence on whether a sub-national jurisdictional commitments alone can reduce deforestation relative to counterfactual. Appropriate design, good execution.

That the commitment and agreement itself may be an important impetus for devolved progress towards these goals in a low regulation setting like PNG seems important and promising (c.f., BU approaches)

Closely related to “The Power of the state” in spirit, but, here, the state is not particularly powerful.

So what is the story?

Three Comments

On the channels and story

Some questions:

What are provinces actually doing as part of their REDD plus participation and stakeholder engagements?

Is it purely a top down commitment being met, with policies under that?

Given law, order, and governance challenges, enforcement doesn't seem the main channel. Less forest-extractive activities post-commitment?

Small enough number of successful provinces, can document success case activities: put some qual flesh on the quant bones

On Anticipation

Approach is well suited to handle differential timing and heterogeneity, and has more flexible assumptions

But, how were the first and second round provinces selected? (and can we be sure non-treated actually so, re: activities/agreement)

Did the second round provinces positively select in based on expected reductions? Especially after first round (learning)

This goes to causal identification and main threat

May not matter for the substantive qualitative conclusions here, as these estimates are more like announcement effects

On Data and power

Tree cover change. PNG has active forestry and plantations sectors. These are trees, they can change quiet fast, and they are not primary forests and there is a lot of heterogeneity in benefits.

$\Rightarrow$ Crop maps to exclude plantations and forestry; or be clear we are working with net rather than gross. At least need som more discussion on data.

Power. Rough power calculations here would be helpful, to rule out certain effect sizes and know what we can see given the small sample of provinces.

Border discontinuities could be a promising avenue to replicate the findings over time with a different approach, or synth (similar)