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The Costs and Reliability of Forest Carbon Monitoring by Communities

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Introduction

This chapter primarily addresses the costs of forest monitoring for carbon stock changes, as carried out by local communities in ground-level inventories. The question we ultimately seek to answer is whether community monitoring of carbon stock changes is cost-effective, taking into account the costs of training and the subsequent monitoring by communities with limited supervision. It is of course necessary also to evaluate whether the results of such community-based surveys are reliable, and this we test by statistical comparison between the results of community inventories and those of professional foresters and scientists at the same sites. The chapter concludes by describing other advantages of community monitoring, which may have profound implications for the long-term sustainability and cost-effectiveness of national REDD+ programmes.

Cost components of community carbon forestry

Forest monitoring is one of the major costs that will be incurred in national REDD+ programmes, and if communities are involved in REDD+ through some form of community forest management, the possibility arises that they could do the measurement and monitoring themselves. Besides the monitoring costs, there are many others associated with community carbon forestry, including the set-up and general management costs of community forest management (CFM) initiatives, and the opportunity costs that the local people face in choosing to manage the forest sustainably, rather than convert the land for other uses or overexploit the resources available. These costs are not dealt with in this chapter, although they are considered in some of the case studies (Chapters 9 and 11). There is also a set of administration and transaction costs

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