

CCB Standards for Smallholders

Introduction

Land-based activities have grown rapidly in voluntary carbon markets, fostered in part through the emergence of trusted standards, particularly the Verified Carbon Standard (VCS) for carbon accounting combined with the Climate, Community & Biodiversity (CCB) Standards for assurances that projects are not causing harm but delivering benefits to local people and biodiversity. Smallholder- and community-led projects, however, still face a series of challenges. Some of these are linked to the complexities of organizing the participation of many different farmers within one larger project at the scale needed to absorb transaction costs and attract investors. In addition, standards are generally not well adapted to scattered plots and project areas that change as new smallholders join the project.

Aims

This project aims to help farmers in developing countries to access climate finance by strengthening the CCB Standards to help smallholder- and community-led carbon projects by:

- (i) enhancing the CCB Standards framework that smallholder- and community-led projects can use to demonstrate their institutional, governance, and multiple-benefit quality to prospective investors and offset buyers;
- (ii) adapting the CCB Standards framework to make it easier to use for smallholder- and community-led projects;
- (iii) providing guidance to farmer and community groups about how to build effective community institutions, governance, and benefit sharing at the scale needed for land-based carbon projects and about how to achieve the requirements of the CCB standards, and;
- (iv) raising awareness and promoting the elements of the CCB Standards that highlight the special qualities of smallholder- and community-led projects to prospective investors.

Project partners

Climate, Community and Biodiversity Alliance (CCBA)¹ is leading this project in partnership with the Nature Conservation Research Centre (NCRC), Ghana, and Rainforest Alliance.

Activities

The project will engage with a network of agricultural carbon projects in Africa and with current and potential donors and investors to identify challenges and key success criteria for smallholder- and community-led projects, while ensuring that the resulting standards and guidance are broadly applicable and will benefit similar projects globally.

1. **Produce case studies of six existing smallholder- and community-led carbon projects in Africa**, reviewing institutional structure and governance and challenges encountered using the current standards frameworks. The main aim of the case studies is to ensure effective learning from projects to inform the development of criteria and guidance for the smallholder developments of the CCB

¹ The CCBA is a partnership of non-governmental organizations that develops and implements standards to stimulate and promote land-based carbon activities that credibly mitigate global climate change, improve the wellbeing and reduce the poverty of local communities, and conserve biodiversity. The members are Conservation International (the convenor), CARE, Rainforest Alliance, The Nature Conservancy and Wildlife Conservation Society.

Standards. NCRC will lead the communications with interested projects and will organize one site visit to each of four projects prior to the project workshop.

2. **Engage potential investors, donors, and offset buyers to understand the perceived risks and opportunities of smallholder- and community-led projects** and their information and quality assurance needs. CCBA/CI will review and characterize the landscape of current and potential investors, donors and offset buyers, including private and public financing sources and will engage with relevant donors and investors throughout the project.
3. **Review constraints of current standards frameworks for smallholder and community-led projects** and how smallholder/community project support has been addressed in a broad range of standards. This review will be led by Rainforest Alliance and will propose options for strengthening the CCB Standards.
4. **Organize a workshop to facilitate stakeholder participation in the development of CCB Standards** and associated guidance documents. The workshop was held in October 2012 in Africa and included representatives from African smallholder- and community-led carbon projects as well as some other relevant stakeholders, such as governments, donors, and investors. The workshop defined key criteria and elements for the development of the CCB Standards and also provided an opportunity for exchange and learning related to smallholder- and community-led carbon projects.
5. **Develop the CCB Standards through a new optional 'smallholder module'** and/or revise the standards to support the smallholder- and community-led projects. The CCBA will create an advisory committee including a balance of interested parties to support the standards development and revision process and will organize two public comment periods. We will continue communication with projects participating in case studies and other relevant projects to facilitate feedback into the standards and guidance development, including through webinars if this seems effective and feasible.
6. **Develop guidance materials to assist smallholder and community groups to achieve the requirements of the CCB Standards and the smallholder module** and to help them build capacity on effective and equitable community governance and benefit sharing frameworks. The guidance will also help the smallholder and community projects develop communications strategies for effectively engaging investors, donors, and offset buyers. The guidance materials and the CCB Standards developments will be translated into French and Spanish.
7. **Assess potential to support smallholder approaches within national mitigation frameworks, such as national REDD+ strategies and NAMAs** in developing countries through the REDD+ SES. The analysis will explore and clarify how smallholder agriculture carbon projects might fit into existing REDD+ frameworks and strategies and into forthcoming NAMAs.

Project duration: April 2012 to March 2014

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