

IS THERE A ROLE IN REDUCING DEFORESTATION AND FOREST DEGRADATION IN MITIGATING CLIMATE CHANGE? THE CASE OF THE UN-REDD PROGRAMME IN SRI LANKA

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United Nations Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD), launched in 2008 committed to conserve the forest cover to mitigate climate change in developing countries including Sri Lanka. Supportive mechanisms of the programme were developed for addressing the climate change policy, which was a part of the Paris Agreement. Mechanisms have expanded for small countries like Sri Lanka to avoid cross-country leakages, ensure equity and to appreciate high biodiversity values. In this study, we evaluated the impact of the UN-REDD programme on deforestation using a Difference-in-Differences (DID) modeling framework. A panel dataset covering the period 2001-2008 as pre-policy and 2009-2021 as the post-policy period were evaluated from secondary sources. The treatment group consisted of districts that participated in the UN-REDD programme, while all the other districts which have not participated in the programme were included in the control group. The treatment group had the highest values of deforestation, yet trend of both were parallel during the pre-policy period. The underlying key deforestation drivers including encroachment, development projects and private agriculture ventures were identified from SWOT analysis. A large gap in knowledge of deforestation drivers that should be addressed for policy formulation was found. Furthermore, relationship of deforestation with key explanatory variables showed that the population has a positive significant influence on deforestation, while, both provisional gross domestic product and poverty headcount index show negative effects. These results infer that the UN-REDD programme was unable to attain the expected deforestation targets.

Keywords: Deforestation drivers, Difference-in-differences model