

## Implementation of REDD+ Program as a Strategic Climate Diplomacy Instrument: Political Interests of Indonesia (2014–2024)

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### ABSTRACT

Indonesia, as the country with the third largest tropical forest area in the world, plays an important role through the implementation of the REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) program. REDD+ serves as Indonesia's strategic climate diplomacy tool in addressing climate change. This study uses an institutional neoliberalism theoretical framework to understand how international institutions and multilateral cooperation mechanisms operate. The research method used is descriptive qualitative with data collection through literature studies and documentation from official sources. The results of the study show the process and efforts to strengthen institutions to support the implementation of REDD+. REDD+ demonstrates Indonesia's climate diplomacy capacity, enabling Indonesia to obtain financial support from international donors, thereby strengthening the Measurement, Reporting, and Verification (MRV) system and empowering local communities. This study found that climate diplomacy through REDD+ strengthens Indonesia's bargaining position in international forums and makes a tangible contribution to national emissions reduction and the promotion of sustainable development. Overall, REDD+ has become a vital foreign and domestic policy instrument in aligning global and national interests in addressing the threat of climate change.

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### Introduction

Indonesia is the largest archipelagic country in the world with the third largest tropical forest area, reflecting that Indonesia is facing high risks due to climate change and that Indonesia's population is in a strategic position in global climate negotiations. Indonesia has been actively involved in international forums on climate change since the 1990s, continuously striving to balance national development interests with

global emission mitigation demands (Gaora et al., 2023). Indonesia has been greatly affected by climate change through various phenomena such as sea level rise, hydrometeorological disasters, and increasingly frequent forest fires in various places. Therefore, Indonesia now urgently needs to prioritize climate change efforts that could threaten food security and cause a decline in economic growth, which will continue to worsen if climate change is not addressed immediately.

Amidst the urgency of addressing climate change, Indonesia continues to strive to develop and identify significant efforts. REDD is one of Indonesia's efforts to mitigate climate change, with the aim of reducing greenhouse gas emissions to protect and assist in sustainable forest management. This program not only focuses on reducing emissions but also includes forest carbon conservation through sustainable forest management and continuous improvement of forest carbon reserves (Indarto, et al., 2012). The Indonesian government has ratified Law No. 6 of 1994, which officially binds Indonesia to international obligations and entitles it to support and opportunities in achieving the objectives of the convention. Indonesia's involvement in the global climate began when Indonesia, specifically Bali, hosted the COP-13 Conference in 2007, which resulted in Indonesian forests being placed as a key element, especially in the development of the REDD+ scheme (Gaora et al., 2023). Climate change Through REDD+ as an instrument of climate diplomacy mitigation has a significant influence due to its effectiveness in targeting significant sources of emissions. REDD+ is also considered more cost-effective when compared to efforts in other sectors because the cost of maintaining and restoring forests is lower than investing in technology in other sectors. (Seymour & Busch, 2016). The forestry and land use sectors play a major role in national greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, with 60% of emissions coming from deforestation and forest degradation. (Seymour & Busch, 2016)

During 2014-2024, implementation in Indonesia faced various challenges such as cross-sector coordination, complex governance, dependence on external funding, and the need for law enforcement in Indonesia. The issue of climate change continues to be a top priority both nationally and internationally, as can be seen from the various policies and efforts that have been introduced. Indonesia remains strongly committed to climate change efforts, such as strengthening the Paris Agreement and REDD+ diplomacy, which are among the main focuses with great potential in climate change. In the context of climate diplomacy during Jokowi's leadership, various initiatives have been undertaken to strengthen Indonesia's position in the international arena, including the G20, which invited world leaders to visit the mangrove forests in Bali. This reflects national and international efforts to mitigate

climate change. Despite significant progress, there are still various obstacles in utilizing REDD+ as an instrument in climate diplomacy (Astuti & McGregor, 2015). The success of the REDD+ program is considered to be highly dependent on the participation of the national community and the recognition of the national community. This has led to several conflicts between indigenous peoples and other parties that could hinder the implementation of the REDD+ program.

The implementation of the REDD+ program in Indonesia faces various significant challenges and obstacles. This can cause disruptions in the implementation of the program at the local level, but it will also greatly affect Indonesia's position in international climate diplomacy. Indonesia often receives criticism for not doing enough to achieve these goals and for not fully implementing the process. Many parties believe that Indonesia's commitment is still normative and has not been fully realized in concrete steps in the field. The ambitious target of reducing emissions by 29% to 41% by 2030, for example, is considered to be unsupported by a clear and measurable blueprint and action plan. The inconsistency between mitigation policies and the direction of national development is also evident in the government's program to increase electricity capacity by 35,000 MW, which still largely relies on coal, while the target of increasing the share of new and renewable energy to 23 percent by 2025 is still far from being realized, having only reached around 9 percent due to minimal investment in this sector. (Gaora et al., 2023). According to the Climate Action Tracker (CAT), Indonesia's climate change policies are still considered "Highly Insufficient" and Indonesia's climate change diplomacy in the global context is declining and invisible. (Djalal, 2021).

One of the obstacles in its implementation is the complexity of governance and coordination between institutions because REDD+ involves many actors such as ministries, government agencies, and other non-state actors (Indarto et al., 2012). Data from CIFOR shows that around 40% of REDD+ projects experience delays due to a complex bureaucratic system and a lack of coordination between policy-making institutions. Legal certainty and conflicts over land rights are common problems in the REDD+ program process, where it is noted that many forest areas overlap with customary rules that have not been officially ratified and recognized,

ultimately causing legal uncertainty that hinders the REDD+ program process. According to a 2020 report by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (KLHK), Indonesia has approximately 94.1 million hectares of forest, consisting of primary, secondary, and conservation forests. (Ministry of Environment and Forestry, 2020) However, there are indications of overlap in the implementation of the REDD+ program. In addition, data from the Ministry of Agrarian Affairs and Spatial Planning (ATR/BPN) identifies that around 77.3 million hectares of forest land have overlapping permits, such as mining, plantation, and forest area loan permits. This reflects that the complexity of forest management is now a major obstacle in the implementation of the REDD+ program. (Forest Digest Madani, 2023).

East Kalimantan Province is the main jurisdiction for the World Bank-supported REDD+ program and is also facing increasing deforestation. In 2023, deforestation nearly doubled from 79,200 hectares in 2022 to 161,000 hectares in 2023, largely due to the expansion of oil palm plantations (Bulletin, 2024). Central Kalimantan Province has a forest area of approximately 13.12 million hectares, or 85.72% of the province's land area, and also faces challenges in forest management, especially in the 3 million hectares of peatland that serves as a carbon sink (Bappedalitbang Kalteng, 2003). The overlapping permits and exploitative activities in this region require serious attention in climate change mitigation efforts..

Transparency and accountability in the management of REDD+ funds are serious challenges in determining the success of this program. REDD+ funds come from bilateral and multilateral donors, the private sector, and the government, and must be managed properly and transparently. However, several reports indicate that the management of REDD+ funds in Indonesia still faces many obstacles. Seymour and Busch (2016) state that only around 25-30% of REDD+ funds can be accounted for transparently at the local level. This lack of clarity in reporting not only raises doubts among international donors, but also caused a delay in the disbursement of funds from Norway in 2021, indicating that the monitoring and reporting system is still inadequate (Busch, 2016). Indonesia has received results-based financing (RBP) incentives from the REDD+ program, which has great potential to support climate change mitigation. Robert Keohane asserts that international institutions can

reduce uncertainty, mediate interests, and create common rules that enable countries to address collective problems (Keohane, 1984).

However, the success of this mechanism is highly dependent on the effectiveness of institutions in creating transparency, accountability, and fair distribution of benefits. In implementing the REDD+ program in Indonesia, significant challenges arise from economic and political pressures that affect the effectiveness of climate change mitigation efforts. Indonesia faces a dilemma between maintaining high economic growth and preserving the environment, particularly tropical forests, which contribute significantly to greenhouse gas emissions due to deforestation. The expansion of extractive sectors, such as oil palm plantations and mining, continues to be a major driver of deforestation, which is contrary to the objectives of REDD+. According to Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia. (WALHI, 2024). Although REDD+ aims to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, economic pressures to clear new land to meet demand for palm oil and mineral exports have kept deforestation rates high. This creates a complex dilemma, where short-term economic development efforts often sacrifice long-term conservation, leading to conflicts of interest between the economic and environmental sectors.

The implementation of REDD+ can also have a negative impact on local economies that depend on forests. When forests are left to grow naturally without intervention, community access to forest resources becomes limited, halting economic activities that depend on forests. This raises concerns that strict implementation of REDD+ could lead to economic decline at the local and national levels, triggering social and political resistance. Furthermore, the rise in commodity prices since the mid-2000s has increased competition for land, making the implementation of REDD+ more expensive and complex. (Indriatmoko, 2013) Market pressures and economic investment needs make it difficult for governments and businesses to prioritize forest conservation over economic expansion. This situation worsened due to the 2008 global financial crisis, which shifted the focus from climate change to macroeconomic issues. However, carbon trading mechanisms and results-based payments (RBP) in the REDD+ program open up new economic opportunities for local communities through the development of non-timber

forest products and social forestry. The success of these initiatives depends on the sustainability of accurate carbon emissions recording and reporting, which is still in the development stage in Indonesia.

The dilemma between economic development and environmental conservation is a major challenge in the implementation of REDD+. Policies are needed that balance both interests, strengthen forest governance, and increase local community participation. This step also strengthens Indonesia's climate diplomacy by demonstrating a commitment to reducing emissions without sacrificing sustainable economic development. Thus, climate change is a global urgency that requires immediate action because its impacts continue to increase. Indonesia is using REDD+ as an instrument of climate diplomacy for the period 2014–2024, making this issue a national and international priority in the form of international cooperation facilitated by global institutions and driven by a shared interest in tackling climate change. However, the implementation of REDD+ diplomacy has not yet fully met expectations, as it still faces various challenges and obstacles, particularly in terms of the effectiveness of Indonesia's climate diplomacy. This study aims to examine the role of REDD+ in Indonesia's climate diplomacy and identify the opportunities and obstacles faced. With a deep understanding of these opportunities and challenges, this study is expected to provide strategic insights for Indonesia's climate diplomacy in an increasingly complex and sustainability-oriented global order.

## Literature Review

### Theory of Diplomacy

According to Berridge, diplomacy is a process that involves negotiation, persuasion, and representation between countries and international actors. Diplomacy is not only formal meetings or exchanges of diplomatic notes, but also building trust and legitimacy in the international community. The success of diplomacy depends on a country's ability to articulate its national interests effectively, establish open communication, and create a positive perception among global stakeholders. Trust is built through transparency, consistency, and fulfillment of commitments, while legitimacy is

gained when a country is seen as credible, responsible, and contributing positively to the common good. On environmental issues, legitimacy is important for accessing international support, funding, and partnerships. (Berridge, 2010)

In the context of global environmental issues, such as climate change, diplomacy has become increasingly complex and requires cross-sectoral negotiation expertise. Environmental issues are no longer solely a technical domain, but have become part of a strategic foreign policy agenda. In this context, climate diplomacy is not just a matter of ordinary bilateral or multilateral negotiations, but involves intensive and inclusive coordination between various actors with different interests, capacities, and responsibilities. Countries, including Indonesia, must be able to combine domestic interests with international demands and expectations through diplomacy. Berridge (2010) highlights that environmental diplomacy requires efforts to build consensus, strengthen coalitions, and manage differences in interests constructively in order to achieve sustainable joint solutions. (Berridge, 2010).

Climate diplomacy is a branch of environmental diplomacy that focuses on negotiations, cooperation, and relations between countries in addressing global climate change issues. Climate diplomacy is a very important field in global governance, where the global environment must be taken seriously in facing the challenges of climate change. In an article by Gianna Gayle Herrera Amul and Maxim Shrestha (2015) entitled *Cities and Climate Diplomacy in The Asia-Pacific*, they explain three main conditions for climate diplomacy to work well, including: (AMUL & SHRESTHA, 2015):

1. Climate diplomacy must involve interactions between actors that transcend political boundaries, meaning not only countries but also non-state actors such as NGOs, the private sector, and civil society
2. These actors have an interest in maintaining their strategic positions in global climate governance

These interests are aimed at gaining influence in global decision-making on climate issues. This shows that climate diplomacy is a multidimensional arena of negotiation involving various actors with different interests.

## Methods

This research method is qualitative with a descriptive approach to understand the implementation of the REDD+ program as an instrument of Indonesian climate diplomacy. The data used is secondary data from books, journals, policy documents, government reports, and publications from international institutions related to REDD+ and climate diplomacy. Data collection was carried out through literature and documentation studies, by examining scientific literature, official documents, archives, annual reports, statistical data, agreement results, and program evaluations. Additional observations were made through monitoring official media and government publications. In addition, observations of the phenomenon of REDD+ policy development and implementation were monitored through official media and government publications to supplement the data.

Data analysis was conducted inductively by reducing, summarizing, and identifying important themes and patterns, which were then presented in a systematic descriptive narrative. Data validity was maintained through triangulation by comparing various sources and retesting the research objects and library references. The research instruments consisted of library study guidelines and systematic documentation focused on topics and key questions to guide the data collection and analysis process in accordance with the research focus, thereby producing an analysis that was objective, comprehensive, and relevant to the research objectives. Thus, this research design prioritizes a descriptive qualitative approach through consolidated secondary data collection, in-depth analysis, and rigorous validation, thereby providing a comprehensive overview and understanding of the role and contribution of the REDD+ program in Indonesia's climate diplomacy during the 2014–2024 period.

## Result and Discussion

### Result

The implementation of REDD+ in Indonesia (2014–2024) has significantly changed the role of climate diplomacy both nationally and internationally. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs formed a Climate Diplomacy Task Force to

integrate climate issues into foreign policy and strengthen Indonesia's negotiating position in multilateral forums. The formation of the Climate Diplomacy Task Force is an important step in consolidating Indonesia's position in the international arena. This institution serves as the spearhead in coordinating climate negotiation strategies that integrate climate change issues into all foreign policies. With the existence of this task force, Indonesia has adopted a structured and proactive approach to climate diplomacy, enabling it to deal with the complexity of global negotiations that demand inclusive and results-based multilateral diplomacy.

Indonesia has established strategic partnerships with international donors, such as a Letter of Intent with Norway worth USD 1 billion, providing concrete evidence of how climate diplomacy works through funding, technology transfer, and forestry policy reform. These bilateral relationships provide a strategic context for Indonesia to mobilize resources and technical capacity to meet verifiable and measurable emission reduction targets. Although this partnership ended due to differences in principles, Indonesia's climate diplomacy remains adaptive and sustainable, demonstrating maturity and independence in responding to global political dynamics while maintaining its commitment to the Paris Agreement and the sustainable development agenda. This cooperation enhances Indonesia's credibility in implementing the REDD+ program and strengthens its position in climate diplomacy. (Astuti & McGregor, 2015)

Indonesia has consistently been active in international forums such as the UNFCCC, COP, G20, and ASEAN, demonstrating a consistent diplomatic focus on promoting the country's position as a “forest superpower.” Its position as the country with the third largest tropical forest area in the world gives it strong leverage to play a bridge-building role that connects the global mitigation agenda with national development needs. The hosting of COP-13 in Bali in 2007 was a historic moment that cemented Indonesia's reputation in climate diplomacy, strengthening its credibility and vision in driving the issue of forests as a key element in climate change negotiations.

Indonesia's climate change diplomacy is being strengthened through the integration of national policies, particularly the synchronization of the REDD+ strategy with the 2019–2024 National Medium-Term Development Plan

(RPJMN) and the 2030 FOLU Net Sink Target. This synergy indicates that climate change diplomacy does not only depend on political narratives or verbal commitments, but is also manifested in concrete and systematic domestic policies. The multidimensional approach involves central and regional government actors, indigenous peoples, NGOs, and the business world, which strengthens transparency and accountability-based governance, a vital component for building international trust and legitimacy. This shows that Indonesia is capable of delivering climate change diplomacy that is not only responsive but also progressive in the context of sustainable development. Indonesia's climate change diplomacy is reflected in the COVID-19 pandemic, which has tested the capacity for coordination and innovation in climate change mitigation mechanisms.

The use of digital technology and online methods in the implementation of REDD+ during the pandemic symbolizes the adaptation of Indonesia's climate diplomacy, which remains productive and relevant, maintaining the continuity of emission reduction programs despite being constrained by uncertain global conditions (Wong, 2022). A multidimensional approach involving various actors, ranging from central and local governments, indigenous peoples, NGOs, to the private sector, helps strengthen transparent and accountable program governance, particularly through the development of Measurement, Reporting, and Verification (MRV) and Safeguard Information System (SIS) in accordance with IPCC standards (Gaora et al., 2023).

## Discussion

### Climate Change Diplomacy Through The Implementation Of Redd+ Indonesia

The 2014-2016 Indonesian REDD+ Program entered an initial consolidation phase that strengthened climate diplomacy and greenhouse gas emission reduction targets. This phase is marked by several important achievements, including the receipt of USD 103.8 million in Results-Based Payments (RBP) from the Green Climate Fund (GCF), the strengthening of bilateral cooperation with Norway through a USD 1 billion Letter of Intent (LoI), and the reaffirmation of commitments under the Paris Agreement. (Green Climate Fund Task Force, 2020).

Bilateral cooperation between Indonesia and Norway through a Letter of Intent (LoI) signed in 2010 worth USD 1 billion added a strategic dimension to Indonesia's climate diplomacy. This cooperation focuses on results-based financing, technology transfer, and forestry policy reform that results in improved forest governance and more effective deforestation management (Astuti & McGregor, 2015).

Based on the REDD+ Monitoring and Evaluation (Monev) report for Indonesia for the period 2014-2016, Indonesia became the first country in the Asia-Pacific region to receive results-based funding (Results-Based Payment/RBP) from the GCF amounting to USD 103.8 million in return for reducing emissions by 20.25 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub>e in the 2014-2016 period. This funding is an important milestone in proving Indonesia's credibility in managing the REDD+ program transparently and accountably, while strengthening the country's climate diplomacy position in international forums. The funding was allocated to support three main components that play a strategic role in Indonesia's climate change diplomacy. First, strengthening coordination and developing a national REDD+ program architecture that enables policy integration and cross-sectoral synchronization. Second, strengthening sustainable forest governance through the development of Forest Management Units (KPH) and village forests, which strengthen the participation of local communities and the adoption of sustainable management practices. Third, implementing conservation, land rehabilitation, and forest fire control, which directly contribute to reducing emissions while maintaining ecosystem stability.

Table. Management of REDD+ RBP Funds for the 2014-2016 Period

No	Output	Budget (USD)
1	Strengthening Coordination and Implementation of REDD+ and the Overall REDD+ Architecture (Enabling Conditions)	9,40 million
2	Support for sustainable forest governance, to support sustainable forest management by expanding and improving the implementation of Social Forestry (PS), development of forest management units (KPH), forest and land rehabilitation, fire control and ensuring sustainable livelihoods	93,40 Million
3	Project management	0,98 Million
TOTAL		103,78 Million

Source: RBP RED For Result Period 2014-2016 GCF

Technically, Indonesia has succeeded in strengthening the architecture of its national REDD+ program by focusing on the development of a transparent and credible monitoring, reporting, and verification (MRV) system. The systems developed, such as the Forest Reference Emission Level (FREL), the National Forest Monitoring System (NFMS), and the Safeguards Information System (SIS), support the measurement and reporting of auditable emissions (UNDP, 2022). Its involvement in results-based payments proves that Indonesia is capable of playing a central role as a “forest superpower” with strategic interests in global climate mitigation and domestic sustainable development. This achievement strengthens Indonesia's position as a strategic “forest superpower” in climate diplomacy, which blends global emission reduction interests with sustainable national development, recognition of indigenous peoples' rights, and local empowerment. Transparent and accountable implementation of REDD+ also builds global trust in Indonesia's commitment, opening up opportunities for broader bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

Indonesia strengthened its climate diplomacy and synchronized national policies, which are crucial in supporting Indonesia's foreign interests through the REDD+ program. During this period, Indonesia further solidified its position as a strategic actor on the international stage through its active participation in various key multilateral forums such as the Conference of Parties (COP) under the UNFCCC, the G20 forum, ASEAN, and other multilateral mechanisms. Indonesia's climate change diplomacy during this period highlighted REDD+ as the main mitigation instrument used to advocate for forest-based sustainability policies and investments, natural resources that are Indonesia's main assets in facing the global climate crisis. Its position as the country with the third largest tropical forest area in the world gives Indonesia strong leverage to play a role as a bridge-builder connecting global and national interests in climate change mitigation, while strengthening its bargaining power in international negotiations. (Gaora et al., 2023)

Indonesia continues to strengthen governance through the development of a more transparent and accountable national MRV system by developing spatial information systems such as SIMONELA and SIMONTANA that support accurate deforestation monitoring. Within the

regulatory framework, Regulation of the Minister of Environment and Forestry No. P.70 of 2017 provides a legal basis for the REDD+ implementation mechanism regarding REDD+ Implementation Procedures, Role of Conservation, Sustainable Management of Forests and Enhancement of Forest Carbon Stocks. It regulates the measurement, reporting, and verification (MRV) mechanism and technology-based REDD+ data management that supports the transparency and accountability of the REDD+ program by involving various stakeholders, including local communities. The MRV mechanism includes the formation of an Independent Verification Team and a national registry system (SRN-PPI) as a database for REDD+ management. (Minister of Environment and Forestry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2017) The alignment of the National Development Policy (RPJMN 2019-2024) with the national REDD+ strategy is an important milestone in this period. The RPJMN sets a target of FOLU (Forestry and Other Land Use) Net Sink 2030, which requires the continuity of REDD+ implementation with the national sustainable development agenda.

The implementation of REDD+ in 2020-2022 highlights adaptive responses to global crisis challenges, the advancement of national strategic policies, and the increased role of climate diplomacy through more integrated and solution-oriented international cooperation. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Indonesia's climate change diplomacy continued to be adaptive and innovative despite global restrictions. Based on the 2020 Performance Report of the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (KLHK), Indonesia has successfully implemented various concrete measures in the REDD+ program that support consistent climate change mitigation commitments. In the same year, the social forestry and forest area redistribution programs continued to be implemented with remarkable achievements, with social forestry permits reaching 409,934 hectares, far exceeding the target. The TORA program also contributed by releasing 72,956 hectares of forest area for local communities. Forest area management improved with an effectiveness index reaching 114.29% of the target, an indication of increasingly structured and professional forest management despite the pandemic limiting physical activities (KLHK, 2021).

In terms of policy, the government issued Presidential Regulation No. 98 of 2021, which

regulates the Implementation of Carbon Economic Value (NEK), establishing a framework for carbon trading mechanisms and economic incentives for controlling greenhouse gas emissions in the Forestry and Other Land Use (FOLU) sector. The implementation of this Presidential Regulation includes a national carbon credit registry scheme (SRN-PPI), the role of independent verification institutions, and the harmonization of reporting standards with the UN-FCCC. This policy enhances the credibility of Indonesia's climate diplomacy on the international stage, expands access to carbon markets and global funding sources. Furthermore, this policy strengthens community and private sector participation in internationally recognized mitigation actions and integrates REDD+ into national mitigation policies (JDIH BPK, 2021).

In September 2021, Indonesia decided to terminate its REDD+ cooperation with Norway because Norway did not realize the RBP payment due to the conditions imposed on Indonesia. One of the conditions imposed, which was considered contrary to Indonesia's national principles, was the evaluation of the Environmental and Forestry Training Center (BDLH), which was regulated in a Presidential Regulation (Puspa, 2021). Therefore, on September 10, 2021, Indonesia decided to terminate the Letter of Intent (LoI) with Norway regarding the REDD+ program. This information was conveyed through a diplomatic note to the Norwegian Embassy in Jakarta. The main reason behind this decision was Norway's lack of progress in implementing results-based payments for emission reductions of 11.2 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub>e, which had been verified by international institutions in 2016/2017. However, the termination of this cooperation does not diminish Indonesia's commitment to reducing emissions, as Indonesia remains committed to the Paris Agreement and the sustainable development agenda. Over the past two decades, especially in 2020, Indonesia has experienced an increase in deforestation rates, despite a significant decrease in the area of forest fires. (Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021).

Innovations in climate diplomacy during the pandemic were particularly evident in the adaptation of REDD+ implementation methods, especially in the Measurement, Reporting, and Verification (MRV) process. A study by CIFOR-ICRAF showed that shifting from face-to-face approaches to online and hybrid methods

for training, monitoring, reporting, and verifying carbon emissions allowed these activities to continue without compromising health protocols. Indonesia emphasizes the importance of strengthening the capacity of relevant parties through online training involving local governments, forest managers, and local communities. The development of digital technology has become an important part of supporting MRV during the pandemic. The use of mobile applications, remote sensing monitoring, and online collaboration tools accelerates data collection and reporting of emissions/emission reductions, thereby maintaining data efficiency and accuracy despite limited field access due to the pandemic. This approach also facilitates the dissemination of information and the involvement of multi-stakeholder networks, including policy-makers, academics, and local communities, as part of the benefit-sharing mechanism in REDD+. This shows that even though the pandemic has hampered some physical activities, adaptation through online and hybrid approaches and digital technology has enabled REDD+ to continue effectively and inclusively, supporting Indonesia's commitment to climate change mitigation and sustainable development. (Wong, 2022)

Indonesia's foreign policy role related to REDD+ in 2023-2024 marks a phase of increasingly intensive and strategic evaluation and transformation of climate diplomacy. One of the main achievements is Indonesia's success in obtaining USD 103.8 million in funding from the GCF for the RBP REDD+ program, which began in July 2023 and is planned to run until 2030. The funds will be used to strengthen climate change mitigation in 38 provinces at the local and national levels, including the expansion of social forestry by more than two million hectares, the facilitation of the establishment of customary forests, and the assistance of thousands of forest management work plans and pro-climate locations. This project also focuses on community economic empowerment, forest fire control in vulnerable provinces, and increasing technical capacity for greenhouse gas (GHG) reporting at the national and subnational levels. (KEMENLH, 2025). The importance of this program in climate diplomacy is reflected in the strengthening of the REDD+ Safeguard information system, which was updated in November 2023 with the active participation of various stakeholders. This affirms Indonesia's

commitment to transparency, accountability, and policy harmonization between the central and regional governments, creating solid governance at the subnational level, which is the main foundation for the credibility of Indonesia's climate diplomacy (Ditjen PPI, 2024).

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Indonesia strengthened cooperation by updating the REDD+ Security Information Summary (SIS) document in November 2023 for the second time, involving input from various stakeholders. This reflects the strengthening of governance at the subnational level as a key focus, including policy alignment and improved coordination between central and regional governments, as well as the contribution of all stakeholders in achieving FOLU sector emission reduction performance. (Directorate General of PPI, 2024). The diplomatic strategy adopted encourages Indonesia to become a global leader in REDD+ management, particularly within the framework of South-South Cooperation through the 2024 South-South Exchange (SSE) event in Balikpapan. This event brings together various tropical countries with similar experiences to exchange knowledge and accelerate REDD+-based climate mitigation actions. SSE 2024 not only supports Indonesia's bilateral and multilateral diplomacy but also strengthens its position as a geography of climate leadership that connects developing countries in global climate action (KLHK Communication, 2024). The transformation of climate diplomacy strategy strengthens the synergy between the national agenda and results-based global funding mechanisms, ensuring the sustainability of emission reductions while supporting the achievement of Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) targets. (Forest Declaration, 2024) This approach demonstrates Indonesia's maturity in balancing domestic interests and international climate diplomacy, including in facing the complex challenges of climate multilateralism today.

### **Climate Change Diplomacy Strategy Through Redd+ Implementation**

In the early stages of REDD+ implementation in Indonesia, the establishment of a special agency known as the REDD+ Special Agency became an important milestone in strengthening Indonesia's climate diplomacy instruments. This agency was established based on Presidential Decree No. 62 of 2013 and is specifically tasked with coordinating all REDD+ related activities at the national level. The functions of this agency include developing national strategies, synchronizing cross-sectoral programs, managing funding, and strengthening institutional capacity, which are critical prerequisites for the success of REDD+ (Saturi, 2015). It also ensures sustainable funding mechanisms such as Result-Based Payment (RBP), which involves major donors including the Green Climate Fund (GCF), Norway, and the World Bank. Through this agency, Indonesia has successfully accessed funds from measurable and accountable emission reductions, while strengthening synergies between the central government, local governments, indigenous peoples, and the private sector. The development of the Measurement, Reporting, and Verification (MRV) system and the REDD+ safeguard information system (SIS) has become the foundation of global trust, affirming Indonesia's commitment to strong and standardized governance in its climate diplomacy (SIS REDD+, 2024).

As a next step, Indonesia reviewed and strengthened significant legal and policy frameworks to clarify the rights and obligations of forest resource management, which is the main capital of REDD+. This legislation enforces the law against illegal practices such as illegal logging and opens up space for the recognition of indigenous peoples' rights and the protection of indigenous lands. Improvements to the legal framework also include strengthening land management systems that are oriented towards sustainability and conservation. In addition, Indonesia has integrated MRV protocols in accordance with international standards to improve the transparency and accountability of REDD+ implementation results. These efforts strengthen the legitimacy of REDD+ policies and demonstrate Indonesia's seriousness in complying with its international commitments (Ministry of Environment and Forestry of the Republic of Indonesia, 2023).

The development strategy within this legal framework is implemented by strengthening supervisory and regulatory institutions at the central and regional levels, establishing a National Registry System to record carbon yields, and improving cross-sectoral coordination. Concrete examples include the policy of prohibiting new permits in peatland and primary forest areas to prevent deforestation, and the implementation of RAD-GRK at the provincial and district levels as the basis for regional climate policy. Evaluations show that conservation and rehabilitation programs with a multi-stakeholder approach, including indigenous peoples, local governments, and the private sector, increase the effectiveness of REDD+. This third pillar is key to maintaining sustainable mitigation and building trust between relevant parties, including international donors and the global community in the South-South Exchange and UNFCCC forums (Indonesian Ministry of Forestry, 2024).

Climate change diplomacy is realized through sustainable development strategies focused on the conservation and rehabilitation of forest and peatland areas damaged by deforestation and degradation. Indonesia has successfully expanded protected forest areas such as national parks and nature reserves in East Kalimantan, Sumatra, and Papua, which are important for carbon stocks and habitats for rare species. The BioCF-ISFL project in Jambi is rehabilitating extensive peat ecosystems with a target of reducing emissions by 14 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub>e (2020-2025) and USD 70 million in funding. This project combines physical rehabilitation and governance strengthening through the involvement of indigenous communities, recognition of land rights, and preservation of sensitive peat ecosystems. (Indonesian Ministry of Forestry, 2024) This strategy is in line with the 2019-2024 National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) and the 2018-2025 National Strategy for REDD+ (STRANAS REDD+), which target FOLU emissions mitigation and the achievement of a FOLU Net Sink by 2030. Through planned rehabilitation and conservation as well as REDD+ performance-based funding, Indonesia is optimizing sustainable development while significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions. This implementation also maintains ecological and socio-economic sustainability to prevent resource conflicts that could disrupt environmental and community stability. (Forest Insight, 2024).

Indonesian climate diplomacy strives to strengthen participation through capacity building and environmental leadership education, reflecting systematic efforts to raise public awareness and educate the community on the importance of forest conservation and climate change mitigation. This pillar focuses on formal and non-formal education, awareness campaigns, and the integration of environmental values into national and regional development. The Indonesian government is working to implement community-based outreach to improve the capacity of forest managers and local communities through technical workshops, especially in areas prone to deforestation such as Kalimantan and Sumatra. This training covers sustainable land management, emissions monitoring, and forest conservation techniques supported by CIFOR and international partnership programs. One of the most prominent initiatives is the Green Leadership Indonesia program, which has been developing since 2018. This program systematically trains young people through environmental and climate-themed leadership training, equipping them with critical insights, advocacy skills, and the ability to implement environmentally friendly practices in their home communities. Alumni of this program act as environmental ambassadors who actively promote climate mitigation and forest conservation, which has led to increased awareness and a stronger local environmental culture throughout Indonesia (KLHK Communication, 2024).

During the COVID-19 pandemic since 2020, educational efforts have had to adapt to hybrid and online methods. The implementation of virtual MRV training and workshops has successfully expanded the dissemination of information and capacity across regions and countries. Webinars and online courses have connected hundreds of participants from government, academia, and indigenous communities, strengthening the REDD+ education and advocacy network. (Directorate General of PPI, 2024). Indonesia's implementation of this environmental culture was evident at the 2024 South-South Exchange in Balikpapan, East Kalimantan, which served as a forum for knowledge exchange between countries on the implementation of REDD+ and performance-based funding management (RBP). This event demonstrates Indonesia's maturity and success in promoting environmental education as a fundamental part of its climate diplomacy. Through the South-South

Exchange (SSE) 2024, participating countries are expected to improve their comprehensive understanding of REDD+ implementation and integrated REDD+ RBP incentive fund management. The implementation of SSE 2024 aims to increase cross-country capacity by equipping participants with the practical tools and approaches needed to simplify REDD+ initiatives.

## Conclusion

The implementation of the REDD+ program as an instrument of Indonesian climate diplomacy for the 2014–2024 period, can be concluded that REDD+ has a strategic role in climate change mitigation and national and global climate diplomacy. This program effectively integrates national interests in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, sustainable forest management, and empowering indigenous and local communities. Through a framework supported by international institutions such as the UN-FCCC and the Green Climate Fund, REDD+ strengthens Indonesia's bargaining position and demonstrates a real commitment to meeting national and international targets, particularly in the context of the 2030 FOLU Net Sink.

The main contribution of this research lies in strengthening the understanding of REDD+ as a key instrument of Indonesia's climate diplomacy that combines climate change mitigation, natural resource conservation, and sustainable development. The study proposes further development in terms of resolving conflicts of interest between economic development and conservation, increasing transparency in fund management, and strengthening the participation of indigenous and local communities so that Indonesia's climate diplomacy is more effective and inclusive. The practical implications of these findings emphasize the need for harmonization of national policies and increased capacity for multilateral diplomacy, in order to make Indonesia a major player in global climate governance.

The limitations of this study are mainly related to the complexity of multi-actor coordination and changing domestic political dynamics, which can directly affect program implementation. In addition, limited field data and changing global conditions such as the COVID-19 pandemic also constrain the analysis. Therefore, future research should focus on empirical studies involving broader stakeholder interviews and

evaluations of socio-economic impacts at the local level, as well as studies on the application of digital technology in MRV management to improve the accountability and effectiveness of REDD+.

Overall, this study underscores the importance of integrating climate diplomacy and domestic policy through the REDD+ program as an innovative and sustainable model for global cooperation, while paving the way for further research to enhance Indonesia's contribution to climate change mitigation and strengthen international environmental diplomacy.

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