UGANDAN PRIVATE SECTOR FIRMS, REDD+ AND CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR)

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Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, forest conservation, sustainable forest management, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks (collectively known as REDD+) is a low-cost climate change mitigation policy recognized and adopted by the global community under the auspices of United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2007. REDD+ was packaged to be a global market-based instrument (MBI) to incentivize forest conservation by altering market failure in sustainable forest management through assigning more financial value to standing natural forests' carbon and biodiversity that would cover the opportunity costs of other land uses. Developing countries with standing natural forests and engaging in REDD+ would then tap sustainable funding through REDD+ credits sold to promote forest conservation just like market goods and services. However, the required scale of the market-based approach for REDD+ funding is not likely in the foreseeable future because the Paris agreement failed to create the obligatory national caps needed to boost demand for global carbon trading.

International funding and support to REDD+ and related activities from multilateral and bilateral agencies is not expected to expand sufficiently either, to fill the funding gap for REDD+ globally. Involving the private sector to support REDD+ and related activities through corporate social responsibility (CSR) excluding activities undertaken in pursuance of their core business can be one of the options to minimize the funding gap or increase support to REDD+ related activities. Private sector CSR support to REDD+ activities can be a "win-win" scheme to achieve both private sector business sustainability and the still pertinent overall goal of climate change mitigation.

Several studies have analyzed the role of factors internal and external to business firms in influencing environmental related investments. However, in the context of developing countries, the role of other CSR support outside firms' core business on CSR support for REDD+ and related activities is unknown. In addition, while firms' decisions are also influenced by their characteristics, the role of firm type, age and business sector in mediating CSR support for REDD+ and related activities is still missing.

Using the stakeholder theory and organizational science theoretical frameworks, I investigate the above issues among Ugandan private sector firms. Uganda is one of the African countries that is embracing REDD+ in a bid to commit to the UNFCCC and other international natural resource policy regimes relevant to REDD+ but with funding gaps in the readiness phase and very likely in the coming implementation phase. It is also reported that the Ugandan private sector CSR has been growing over the years, because Uganda has been registering increasing foreign direct investment inflows in several business sectors including manufacturing, agriculture, forestry, transport, communication, electricity, oil and gas and, mining and quarrying over the years.

In 2017, I collected publicly available information about the Ugandan private sector from Uganda Revenue Authority, Uganda Manufacturers Association, and Uganda Registration Services Bureau to develop a sampling frame of the study. I used company websites, annual reports, standalone CSR publications, and news sites for Ugandan companies' CSR disclosures. The principal methodology I use is content analysis of the published information in the aforementioned common communication channels of CSR activities and then priori coding, in broad CSR activities categories established on literature review. I will then use quantitative data analysis tools to analyze the data. I plan to wrap up my research with interviews of purposively sampled Ugandan private sector representatives for an in-depth understanding of drivers and barriers of CSR support to REDD+ and related activities.

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