Preface

The idea of paying forest users in the developing world to cut deforestation has given the world an acronym with universal appeal – REDD, or 'Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation'. Implicitly at least, REDD (now REDD+ to include both avoided deforestation and enhancement of forest carbon stocks) promises a 'win–win' solution for mitigating the effects of global warming. REDD+ promises to help maintain standing forests and sequester carbon from the atmosphere while providing cash incentives and other benefits to compensate forest users, build livelihoods and reward indigenous and community groups for their stewardship role. Although it builds quite strongly upon decades of experience with forest conservation and development, REDD+ also conjures up the image of a radical initiative that challenges predatory, 'business-as-usual' practices.

Be that as it may, however, REDD+ can be considered one of the most promising policy initiatives to have emerged so far from international climate change negotiations. Unsurprisingly, it has proved far less contentious than other proposals that would require industrialised countries to curb their greenhouse gas emissions by making major changes to their production and consumption patterns. REDD+ provides a convenient avenue that allows industrialised nations to offset their emissions by paying forest users in the developing world to retain and strengthen forest cover. Latin America has played a leading role in developing REDD+ initiatives. Deforestation is the single largest source of emissions in the region, so that any advance on this front represents a significant contribution to the global effort.

Research and planning during the present early days of 'readiness' preparations have tended to be dominated by economic and natural sciences. All too often, the technical challenges of maximising carbon capture have obscured the often-inconvenient truth that REDD+ must operate within highly diverse social and cultural contexts. For a variety of financial, political and technical reasons, there has been a tendency to ignore or downplay these complexities. Policy-makers and planners are making assumptions about the willingness of forest user groups to adopt REDD+ on the basis of a market-based economic rationale that does not necessarily

fit with social reality. The purpose of this volume is to survey evolving national REDD+ strategies in Latin America in order to explore the varied circumstances to which such policies must adapt, and to consider how diverse social, economic and cultural dimensions are being catered for during this pioneering stage pending the emergence of a post-Kyoto UNFCCC regime.

Chapter 1 examines the relationship between forests and climate change in Latin America, while Chapter 2 considers the background against which REDD policies took shape during the 1990s and subsequent climate change negotiations, culminating in Copenhagen and Cancún. Chapter 3 outlines the major economic assumptions that underpin REDD+ and considers some basic requirements for setting up a national strategy. The next two chapters describe the country contexts for incipient national Latin American REDD+ policies, which are being developed in all but four nations (Venezuela, Uruguay, Belize and French Guiana). Chapter 4 examines how leaders Costa Rica, Mexico and Brazil have embraced and implemented ecosystem payments and REDD+ by reviewing their major project and programme experiences. Chapter 5 does the same for the remaining 14 REDD-adopting Latin American countries, which lag behind to varying degrees.

Against this backdrop, the remaining sections of the book consider several areas of diversity and their implications for the design and implementation of REDD+ initiatives. Chapter 6 examines various aspects of economic and social complexity with reference to early REDD+ schemes and how they have (or have not) been taken into account in the first generation of projects. Attention is drawn to the social determinants of choice in the context of cash incentives, livelihood dynamics and related issues such as land rights. Chapter 7 looks at diversity within REDD+ in terms of the challenges posed by governance and institutional arrangements. Finally, Chapter 8 breaks down the major approaches taken so far in planning REDD+ for dealing with 'social' dimensions. It argues that the existing emphasis on social protection and 'do no harm' safeguard policies are inadequate on their own and should be extended to form a more comprehensive and integrated 'social development' approach. This would be sensitive to diversity and complexity, and allow more effective REDD+ project evaluation and design to be undertaken in future, increasing the likelihood that both people and climate will benefit.