



Helping People and  
The Planet Thrive



# Saving Forests & the Climate, Protecting Rights & Livelihoods

## Policy Brief - REDD+

### What is REDD+ and why is it Important?

Tropical forests are critical for human welfare, biodiversity and the climate. Approximately 1.6 billion people depend on them for their livelihoods; they're the largest land-based store of carbon and house two-thirds of all terrestrial biodiversity. Yet, deforestation is continuing at an alarming rate — 13 million hectares annually or 36 football fields a minute.

Deforestation and forest degradation play a crucial role in climate change, accounting for up to 20 percent of global carbon emissions. Addressing these emissions, through the emerging mechanism called REDD+\*, is imperative for limiting global temperature rise and avoiding the worst impacts of climate change, which will disproportionately impact poor people and developing countries.

REDD+'s purpose is to reduce emissions by providing developing countries with an economic incentive to keep trees standing. This mechanism has the potential to reduce poverty, advance human rights, improve governance and conserve biodiversity, while transforming sustainable land use practices.

### REDD+ Risks

Yet, there are social and environmental risks to placing a monetary value on forests. If implemented improperly, REDD+ can exacerbate inequality and biodiversity loss and threaten the human rights and livelihoods of poor communities and Indigenous Peoples for whom forests often provide the main source of food, fuel and medicines as well as spiritual values. The wealth of valuable knowledge of these communities makes them critical stakeholders for forest conservation. However, REDD+ could deny them access to lands, omit them from decision-making, and exclude them from revenue benefits. Lack of resource access particularly affects girls and women, because they often are tasked with providing food, fuel, water and care for their families.

Environmentally, if forest quantity is emphasized over quality, tree plantations could replace biologically robust forests. Without proper systems in place, protecting



© Nigel Dickinson / WWF-Canon

forests in one area can merely shift deforestation to another, either within a country or to other countries. REDD+ must be appropriately implemented through effective forest governance to avoid such risks and ensure it benefits both people and the environment.

### How to Make REDD+ Work:

#### Social/Environmental Safeguards & Benefits

The value of tropical forests extends well beyond their carbon storage capacity to include important benefits for Indigenous Peoples, forest-dependent communities and biodiversity. Ensuring that local communities participate, benefit, and are not harmed by REDD+ efforts is critical and requires the inclusion of social and environmental safeguards. Social safeguards must do the following:

- Respect and protect rights and access to lands/resources and the interests and livelihoods of Indigenous Peoples and forest-dependent communities;
- Ensure full and effective participation of communities in all stages of REDD+;
- Assure equitable sharing of REDD+ benefits with and within communities;
- Promote women's empowerment and gender equality; and
- Provide a mechanism for resolution of disputes.

Environmental safeguards must ensure that REDD+ maintains carbon density and/or enhances biodiversity and ecosystems by preventing conversion of natural, high conservation value forests into plantations.

\*Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in developing countries and the conservation, sustainable management, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks

## Transparency of Emission Reductions and Safeguards

Part of ensuring robust climate and environmental benefits is a system for measuring, monitoring, reporting and verifying (MRV) that carbon reductions are real. National MRV systems should be developed to utilize internationally approved, science-based standards, including independent verification.

To further ensure that environmental and social benefits are real, safeguards should also be monitored for internationally accepted principles and criteria. Safeguard audits should be verified by an independent, third party or approved through an inclusive country-level process and made public to ensure transparency. All affected stakeholders should be adequately consulted and enabled to participate in the monitoring and verification processes.

To promote efficient use of funds and prevent implementation barriers, accurate monitoring, reporting and verification arrangements should be flexible, practical, and responsive to individual country contexts, while maintaining a minimum standard of acceptable rigor and accountability.

## Financing

Adequate and predictable public funding is critical to laying the foundation for successful REDD+ programs in developing countries.<sup>1</sup> Without a proper foundation of governance reform, capacity building, systems for monitoring safeguards and national MRV systems, REDD+'s effectiveness and legitimacy are jeopardized. Therefore, before countries participate in REDD+ mechanisms, they must demonstrate 'readiness,' making adequate levels of public financing vital for REDD+ readiness efforts at these early stages.

## Global Goal

A global REDD+ goal, as part of a global carbon budget, is critical to limiting global temperature rise and setting the scale for both national targets and required finance. However, while REDD+ is a crucial part of tackling climate change, it should not be an "out" for developed countries, which still need to reduce emissions at home.

## National-level Approach

REDD+ programs should stem from a national-level approach to prevent carbon leakage and holistically address drivers of deforestation, including national policies (e.g., agriculture, timber and mining) that are often the root causes of deforestation and degradation. National programs also help promote accountability, address environmental and social risks and achieve effective implementation.

## Address International Deforestation Drivers

Part of sharing the burden for reducing deforestation and degradation requires developed and emerging economies to reduce international demand-side pressures on forest-related products. Countries driving international demand should reevaluate their policies (e.g. towards sustainably sourced products) while tropical forested countries should also decrease their domestic drivers of deforestation.



© Martin Haney / WWF-Canon

## Engaging Local Communities & Indigenous Peoples

*In the Mai Ndombe landscape in the Democratic Republic of Congo, WWF is putting the management of forest carbon information back in the hands of local communities and Indigenous Peoples.*

*Participatory mapping is helping communities to delineate their traditional rights and usage of the forests; this information is then being uploaded on to a Google Earth platform to start to build a comprehensive information base on social rights to forest.*

*Respecting the rights and including the views of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in the design of national REDD+ programs is fundamental to its success. This effort in DRC is paralleled by work in Madagascar, Nepal, Indonesian Borneo, Peru and Colombia to support local communities' and indigenous peoples' organizations and to explore ways in which REDD+ can be used to strengthen rather than undermine community and indigenous rights.*

<sup>1</sup> According to a 2009 report from the Commission on Climate Change and Tropical Forests, reducing tropical deforestation by 50% will cost \$30 billion per year by 2020. In 2008, Union of Concerned Scientists estimated the cost to be \$20 billion.