

REDDplus with a focus on poverty reduction and development: Criteria for good REDDplus activities that focus on poverty reduction and development.

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Forest carbon project for climate change mitigation triggered a global debate on the valuation of forests as sources of environmental services that are important to economic growth and development (Peter H. May, et al. 2004). Pilot forest carbon projects focusing on conservation and restoration of degraded lands and industrial reforestation across a range of developing countries have helped us to understand how forest ecosystems can generate both global and local benefits by meeting the local developmental needs and achieving global carbon sequestration target. Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and (forest) Degradation (REDD) is a mechanism designed by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to tackle the increasing emissions of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. In 2005, the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) of the United Nations reported that emissions from deforestation alone are responsible for 25%¹ of the total greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. One of the critical component of REDD mechanism towards emission reductions have always been issues of positioning REDD for poverty alleviation and sustainable development in the developing countries.

The fundamental of the Challenges facing the developing countries can be linked to extreme poverty and hunger. Poverty in Africa is predominantly rural where most of the world forests are situated. More than 70 per cent of the African poor people live in rural areas and depend on agriculture for food and livelihood, yet development assistance to agriculture is decreasing (Rural poverty portal, 2012), amidst the climate change threat. Agriculture alone accounts for 29% of the gross domestic product (GDP) in developing countries and provides jobs for 65% of their populations (CTA, 2011). The policy pointers (CTA, 2011) report also reiterated that the global warming will change the face of farming and the already increasing temperature, changing patterns of rainfall, extreme droughts and floods, the shifting distribution of pests and diseases, all of these can be attributed in part to the increase in emissions of greenhouse gases resulting from the human induced activities and subsequently leading to the impact on food production both presently and in the future. These changes pose a huge challenge to the success of REDD mechanism as a tool to reduce emissions from deforestation in the face of local and global demands for food security.

¹ There have been different figures by different organizations on the actual emissions rates from deforestation. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in its report in 2007 presented deforestation emission rate of 17.4%.

Agriculture has failed to receive the attention it deserves in the climate change policy arena. REDDplus became a major focus of recent negotiations but there is no work programme for agriculture as there is for various other issues under the UNFCCC (CTA, 2011). So far, little attention has been paid to how REDD+ will deal specifically with agriculture, and despite the fact that REDD+ will only achieve its objectives of emissions reduction from deforestation if it acknowledges the importance of agriculture as a driver of deforestation, and recognizes the implications of reducing deforestation for food security.

Recent projections of the policy pointer (CTA, 2011) report revealed that based on African population growth and in order to maintain today's already insufficient food consumption level on the continent, yields of all food crops would have to increase by 230% in 2050. No government, either democratic or otherwise will adopt measures to reduce greenhouse gases emissions if they threaten a nation's ability to feed its population. Around 1 billion people still go hungry every day (CTA, 2011). Placing a greater emphasis on agriculture in negotiations on climate change, as in the development of national policies, will ensure that agriculture fully contributes to efforts to adapt and mitigate without undermining food production and the fight against poverty (Michael Hailu, CTA Director and Bruce Campbell, CCAFS Director, 2011). The REDDplus mechanism needs to be positioned in a way that it does not threaten food security. Establishing agricultural work program within REDD framework activity would put agriculture at the heart of climate change negotiations and policy making, ensuring that it makes a full contribution to both adaptation and mitigation without prejudicing food production and poverty alleviation.

Though the climate change impact is not a makeup story even for the local communities anymore, but it's still hard for the local communities to accept the idea of limiting or curbing their activities in the forest where they obtain their daily livelihood. A realistic approach to achieving the global emission reduction goal for REDD mechanism is to ensure it meet the economy needs of the poor communities by providing alternative source of income. Moreover, lower levels of poverty in some contexts can actually lead to greater sustainability through decreased pressure on forest ecosystems (PEP, 2008)². To ensure sustainability and risk reduction for investors and buyers, REDD must be design in a way that will work for the poor (PEP, 2008), and should be projected as a new economy opportunity that will increase the standard of living of the local communities. This is a question of the level of transparency and benefit sharing formula. The local communities have the right to be fully involved in the project implementation and understand fully the economic benefits of project implementation. In addition, not undermining their right of fare equity in benefit sharing accruing from the REDD project.

The poverty environmental partnership (PEP, 2008) report uncover another challenge that could impair REDDplus from meeting the local needs of the people, this is the lack of upfront capital to pre-fund REDD projects. Depending on whom bears the costs for meeting standards and covering upfront costs, these factor could significantly reduce the potential of REDD to benefit the poor. In a direct payment system, this lack of upfront capital would be likely to penalize those unable, such as the chronic poor, to access REDD supply chains in the first place (PEP, 2008). To overcome these issues, alternative financing sources to cover upfront costs will need to be explored at different levels.

² Making REDD work for the poor was prepared on behalf of the Poverty Environment Partnership Report (PEP) in 2008

The community involvement and transparency is an imperative factor for the success of REDD project and its contribution to poverty alleviation. REDD projects should be founded on Free, Prior and Informed Consent, designed in active participation with affected local communities, and conserve biodiversity (FEI, 2011)³. The Friends of the Earth International in his report in 2011 faulted the first big REDD project in 'Central Kalimantan area of Indonesia'⁴. The project was reported to have violated the right of the indigenous people in contrast to the United Nations Declaration of the rights of indigenous peoples. The report states that community groups repeatedly expressed concerns that their rights are not being respected and that the project will not address the relevant drivers of deforestation. In June 2011, a statement signed by 25 mantir adat (custom keepers) from the Kapuas District called for the KFCP to be stopped (FEI, 2011). They raised concerns that the site for the project was decided between the Australian and Indonesian governments without local consultation, that no written assurances that land tenure rights would be respected have been given, that the project implementation is bringing unrest and internal conflict to the community, and that they were doubtful about the promises made by the project (FEI, 2011). Similar story was recently voiced by the Indigenous Peoples Confederation of Honduras (CONPAH) in a strong statement about the lack of consultation related to REDD+ by the Honduras government, and calling for the withdrawal of the draft REDD Readiness it submitted to the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility which lack the principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent.

The potential of REDD project in alleviating poverty and contributing to a sustainable development can be attributed to an approach designed on a transparency and equity principles. Though there are still many pilot REDDplus project in the pipeline, significant efforts have already been invested in REDD at the national and international level (CIFOR, 2010). To implement REDD successfully, similar attention now needs to be given to how to translate REDD into action on the ground that would significantly affect the lives of the local communities in a positive way. REDD offers a critical opportunity to enhance the well being of forest communities, it is more likely to be successful if they are build on, rather than conflict with, the interests of local communities and indigenous groups (CIFOR, 2010).

³ FEI - Friends of the Earth International is an international federation of diverse grassroots-based environmental organizations with over 2 million members and supporters around the world.

⁴ The Kalimantan Forests and Climate Partnership (KFCP) is a bilateral forests and climate agreement between the Governments of Indonesia and Australia, that was first announced in 2007. It is intended to produce carbon offsets by reducing emissions from deforestation and land degradation.

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