

Income and Equity outcomes of REDD+ initiatives across the globe

Reducing carbon emissions through avoided deforestation and forest degradation and enhancement of carbon stocks (REDD+) seeks to compensate local stakeholders for avoided emissions from forest conversion and use, and thus provide a path-breaking solution for climate change mitigation and sustaining rural livelihoods. A key element of the social objectives and integrity of REDD+, and reflected in the Cancun Safeguards, is that compensation must be fair and equitable among stakeholders. Recent evidence suggests however that community-level compensation, whether monetary or in other forms, is often preferred to individual or household level payments (1); this evolution from the original idea centered on direct cash payments has important implications on fairness and equitability of compensation. It is unclear whether REDD+ initiatives are succeeding in ensuring that benefits are improving livelihoods of local stakeholder, and whether any improvement is achieved in an equitable manner within villages and communities.

The Global Comparative Study on REDD+ led by the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), studied REDD+ implementation at 22 subnational REDD+ initiative sites in Brazil, Peru, Cameroon, Tanzania, Indonesia and Vietnam. We carried out village and household-level surveys in 17 sites, 129 villages, and nearly 4,000 households in 2010-2012 (pre-intervention) and 2013-2014 (post-intervention), the sample comprising control and treatment groups. Our data include detailed valuation of all income activities, and is therefore well suited to assess how REDD+ burdens and benefits are distributed among local stakeholders.

The majority of interventions carried out by REDD+ proponents are positive incentives such as livelihood enhancements (2). We find that income has increased over time at the aggregate level and at most of our study sites. In comparison with this background dynamics, impacts of REDD+ were minimal or negligible in the majority of our study villages. We nevertheless observe both positive and negative correlation with REDD+ interventions in 6 of 17 study sites; moreover, high heterogeneity of income share can be found at all scales including at the community level. Opportunity costs also vary by order of magnitudes between the poorest and the richest households within the same communities, and are distributed differently between income groups.

Our results underline the complexity of designing efficient compensation mechanisms that can target and reflect heterogeneity of livelihoods and sensitivity to REDD+ interventions. Even within a community, planning and implementing targeted interventions carries the risk of affecting stakeholders differently challenging the overall equitability. An individual focus on intervention targeting and compensation would help ensure effectiveness and equity, but highly costly and inefficient. On the other extreme of the spectrum, a broader brush is likely to undermine participation and equitability of the initiative if particular stakeholder groups are disadvantaged. Moreover, they also underline how clear mechanisms to account for the temporal dimension of equitable compensation, and how to monitor impact over time, are largely absent. Further analyses will investigate the link between positive and negative impacts of REDD+ intervention and equity, with the aim to identify underlying characteristics that help explain the different outcomes.

Our findings will provide empirical evidence in support of a sensitive yet unanswered question in REDD+. As forest countries are challenged with the design and implementation of safeguard and monitoring systems according to the finalized Warsaw framework for REDD+, our results aim to inform REDD+ practitioners and policy makers on crucial design elements that need attention to achieve equitable

REDD+, and provide insights on what has worked and what hasn't in the REDD+ experience to date.

Keywords: REDD+, climate change mitigation, non-carbon benefits, equity, rural livelihoods

References

- 1) de Sassi, Claudio, et al. "REDD+ on the ground: Global insights from local contexts." REDD+ on the ground: A case book of subnational initiatives across the globe. Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), Bogor, Indonesia, 2014.
- 2) Sunderlin, William D., et al. The challenge of establishing REDD+ on the ground: Insights from 23 subnational initiatives in six countries. Vol. 104. CIFOR, 2014.