



REDD+ can achieve both local and global sustainability goals

UN-REDD+ programmes that promote the sustainable use of forests may support local conservation and poverty alleviation goals, in addition to achieving global climate change benefits, according to a recent study. Existing multilateral funding schemes can provide important lessons for the development of UN-REDD+.

The United Nations' Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (UN-REDD) initiative was set up in 2008 to help developing countries reduce carbon emissions from forested areas by placing a value on the carbon stored in forests. Financial incentives are offered to prevent forests in developing countries being cleared or damaged by conversion to agricultural or pasture land, and from extensive logging and burning. UN-REDD+ extends the concept of UN-REDD by including the protection of biodiversity and the livelihoods of poor communities, in addition to the protection of carbon stocks, through the sustainable management of forests.

Similarities between an existing multilateral funding mechanism set up some twenty years ago, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), and the evolving UN-REDD+, offer the opportunity to transfer lessons learnt from the GEF to the design and establishment of UN-REDD+. This study explores some of the issues in common to the two programmes. The GEF and UN-REDD+ are both primarily concerned with two main environmental issues: climate change and biodiversity. Donor countries (the developed nations) provide assistance to developing countries and countries with economies in transition to address these concerns. Both programmes have similar organisational and institutional structures: the major institutions for implementing the GEF plans are the World Bank, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). UN-REDD+ has a similar basic structure, with the addition of the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization).

For the GEF, the advantage of this broad organisational structure has been the effectiveness of these institutions in promoting biodiversity-focused ecosystem protection and poverty alleviation projects on the ground. This has increased the legitimacy of the GEF for recipients in poorer countries. With a similarly broad structure, UN-REDD+ has more potential to include the widest range of stakeholders and values in the design and implementation of projects than if it was structured as a single, streamlined organisation. In addition, donor nations might provide more funds if existing organisations are used, avoiding the expense of setting up new bodies.

Evaluation of GEF's performance has focused on the cost-effectiveness of projects - the success of projects tends to be evaluated in terms of global benefits (climate change impacts) rather than how well projects have responded to local needs (biodiversity projects). Given that carbon storage and uptake (providing global benefits) is usually easier to monitor and verify than biodiversity schemes, REDD+ has the opportunity to extend monitoring mechanisms that balance the impacts of carbon storage schemes with protection of other ecosystem services in addition to protecting local livelihoods.

In addition, the large economies in transition (China, Brazil, Mexico, India, Russia and the Philippines) have received more funding from the GEF than the smaller developing economies. GEF funding and projects are fairly evenly divided between climate change and biodiversity, highlighting the importance of both issues to the GEF. But when co-financing of projects from private-public partnerships, (and beyond the control of the GEF) is included, climate change projects have received the greatest share of resources.

By promoting the sustainable use of forests and involving local communities in designing and implementing UN-REDD+ projects, UN-REDD+ can produce global climate change benefits and receive legitimisation from recipients by realising local conservation and poverty alleviation goals.

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