

# UNFCCC COP17 Policy Position Paper on **REDD** (Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation)

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## Securing safeguards

Significant progress has been made among the negotiators so far this year on the system for providing information on REDD+ safeguards, however there is still much work to do as Parties consider text by the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technical Advice (SBSTA) for a COP decision.

## CARE demands for COP17

Parties must agree on practical guidance that provides effective incentives for governments to make the safeguards operational, rather than accept weak wording at the level of broad principles in the interest of achieving an easy consensus. Such an outcome would impede progress and further delay national readiness actions for implementing safeguards.

Parties must also agree to a high standard of information on the implementation of safeguards to ensure that national REDD+ safeguards systems adequately address:

- Protecting against violations of human rights or other negative consequences for poor and marginalised groups; and
- Sharing REDD+ benefits equitably with, and also within, indigenous and local communities.

## Safeguards compliance is critical

As many as 300 million people, most of them very poor, depend on the world's forests for their daily survival.<sup>1</sup> REDD+ when done well can support livelihoods, maintain vital ecosystem services and preserve global biodiversity; but done badly it can also exacerbate inequality and contribute to the violation of the rights of forest dependent people. Such risks are accentuated in countries and regions with weak forest governance.

REDD+ has the potential to transform forest management by recognizing and rewarding the crucial role of indigenous peoples and forest dependent communities as stewards of these forests.

The Cancun Agreements reached in 2011 include a set of safeguard provisions, which taken collectively, can ensure that REDD+ is effective, equitable and respects the rights of forest-dependent communities. The system for providing information on how safeguards are being implemented is one of the outstanding issues in REDD+ that are up for negotiation at COP17.

Other issues on REDD+ that will arise in Durban are REDD finance and reference levels, arguably more technical and/or more contentious. This creates the risk that safeguards will be treated as an easy win, where consensus can be achieved using bland wording that does not give meaningful guidance or incentive to governments for implementation.

The implementation of REDD+ safeguards and the impact they have on the ground depends on how countries interpret their international commitments for developing their national safeguards systems.

<sup>1</sup>(MEA) Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. 2005. Ecosystems and Human Well-Being: Policy Responses. Volume 3, Ch. 8. Island Press, Washington, DC. / World Bank. 2003. World Development report 2003: Sustainable development in a dynamic world: Transforming institutions, growth and quality of Life. The World Bank: Washington DC.

## Risks of REDD+ without social safeguards

Experience from other forest initiatives shows that indigenous peoples and local communities are critical to success; yet they can also be harmed by poorly implemented or conceived projects, and are often excluded from receiving a fair share of the benefits. For REDD+ there is a danger of:

- Indigenous peoples and forest-dependent communities being denied rights and access to lands and resources essential for their livelihoods.
- Disproportionately negative impacts on women, who are usually responsible for water, firewood and wild forest products as part of the domestic economy, and for whom options for response are limited by lower access to education, cash and decision-making.
- Revenues going mainly to powerful interests within countries and within communities, with few benefits reaching local communities and the poorer women and men of these communities.

## The wider climate deal

REDD+ in developing countries can contribute to removing carbon from the atmosphere, but is only a meaningful response to climate change as part of a comprehensive and ambitious global commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Atmospheric carbon concentrations are approaching 390 parts per million. Forests play a critical role in bringing this down to 350 ppm.

For the sake of the planet, deforestation and forest degradation must be effectively reduced. In so doing, the collective and individual human rights of women and men must be respected and protected.

## Building on what's already agreed

The international agreement on REDD+ reached at COP16 in Cancun already includes the commitment to:

- Ensure **full and effective participation** of indigenous peoples and local communities in developing and implementing REDD+ and, through recognition of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, accept the principle of **free, prior, and informed consent**.
- **Consider gender** within their REDD+ programmes, with regard to safeguards, benefit sharing, participation and capacity-building.
- **Provide information on safeguards** including institutional reforms, consultation processes and social impacts.
- Address the **drivers of deforestation**, both in national REDD+ strategies and internationally, with all parties acting to reduce pressure on forests.

## Safeguards and REDD+ finance

Increasingly negotiators are heading towards acceptance of a basket approach for REDD+, which allows countries to pick and choose funding mechanisms according to their circumstances.

Social standards and safeguards are necessary however REDD+ is financed, though the nature of specific safeguards may be different under different financing regimes. A decision on rigorous implementation of REDD+ safeguards is not conditional on resolution of the funding issue.

In the short term, the need for funds to support all aspects of the readiness process, including implementation of national standards and safeguards, would be facilitated by establishing a specific REDD+ window in the Green Climate Fund. This would minimize conflict with other essential climate change funding such as adaptation.

If industrialised countries use REDD+ credits simply to offset their emissions and thereby avoid reducing their domestic emissions dramatically, climate change will accelerate further threatening the world's forests.

## Dealing with the basket approach

The dichotomy between public (or fund-based) and private (market-based) finance for REDD+ can be confusing. The public sector can engage in carbon markets, and private capital can be used to set up funds. Private finance carries the risk of being commonly associated with offsets, which contribute to perpetuating unsustainable emissions levels in industrialized countries.

Public finance raises multiple issues of volume, governance, conditionality and sovereignty. There are many suggestions for innovative and hybrid approaches but few of these have been considered seriously in the negotiations.

More important than the source of funding is how the transaction is subsequently used. REDD+ will fail as a climate mitigation and sustainable development measure unless funding meets certain critical conditions, namely that:

- It is not used for offsets that allow buyers to avoid making real emissions reductions;
- It does not lead to displacement of deforestation from one place to another; and
- It is conditional on the effective implementation of safeguards.

## Finance for performance

It is commonly accepted that the aim for REDD+ is to move towards a "performance-based" phase of implementation. CARE believes that the achievement of carbon gains is conditional on the respect and protection of rights. Thus the concept of performance applies not only to carbon sequestered but also to compliance with the governance, social and environmental safeguards.