



Building effective pro-poor REDD-plus interventions:

How enhanced multi-stakeholder processes can ensure REDD-plus works for vulnerable communities

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What is at stake?

REDD-plus¹ offers major opportunities to turn around tropical deforestation and degradation worldwide. However, if REDD-plus is not designed well, implementation can result in direct and significant harm to vulnerable, forest dependent groups. A wealth of experience exists that tells us that forests can only be protected from deforestation and degradation if the needs and rights of the people that depend on them are not only taken into account but actively and fairly addressed. Many forest dependent people belong to some of the most marginalised and impoverished communities on earth. Unfortunately, processes intended to ensure consultation with and involvement of these groups in decisions about forests have a poor track record, are often cursory and superficial, and fail to address rural communities' interests and concerns adequately. Pro-poor approaches for REDD-plus aim to turn around that trend by encouraging an early and sustained focus on the needs of marginalised groups, such as indigenous peoples, women, and other forest dependent people and communities.

It is critical that national REDD-plus processes learn from and build on past experiences as to how stakeholder engagement can shape and accelerate the sort of forest governance reform required to deliver real, transformative changes in land-use patterns and practices. This means that greater attention needs to be paid to making REDD-plus truly pro-poor – because a REDD-plus that reinforces the inequities and exclusion of the past simply will not deliver the climate mitigation dividend that the world is seeking.

This brochure draws on the work of IUCN and its members across Asia, Africa and Central America and aims to explain not only why multi-stakeholder processes still need to be given more attention during the REDD-plus readiness phase but also how they can be enhanced to provide new insights into how REDD-plus can be more effective and equitable.

How advanced is the REDD-plus concept?

Although negotiations have not yet led to a formal agreement on REDD-plus under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), many developing countries are making considerable progress with REDD-plus readiness on the ground. These countries are preparing national REDD-plus strategies as part of the current readiness phase. Consistent with the consensus reached so far in the UNFCCC negotiations, capacity building, governance reform, stakeholder consultation and the delivery of co-benefits are important elements of the current preparatory phase. There has also been generally good progress on the analysis of national drivers of deforestation and the establishment of methodologies and approaches to monitor changes in carbon stocks. However this relatively fast technical progress comes at a cost. Many of the people who will be directly affected by national REDD-plus schemes know little, if anything, about what REDD-plus will entail and whether or how they will benefit. And this information gap works both ways as government agencies, donors and international agencies are starting to make decisions about REDD-plus often with little clear idea about the nature and extent of the dependency of poor rural communities on forests.

¹ Throughout this publication, REDD-plus refers to “reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries; and forest conservation, sustainable management of forests and the enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries,” in line with par. 1.b.iii of the Bali Action Plan.

What can multi-stakeholder processes do for REDD-plus frameworks?

Multi-stakeholder dialogue (MSD) processes tend to have rather a weak image as “talking shops” that risk delaying action on the ground. The truth however is quite the opposite if the MSD is well designed and implemented. MSDs can help advance solutions to complex, persistent problems – such as forest loss and degradation – by strengthening the analysis of what lies at the root of the challenge being addressed and by uniting disparate groups with very different opinions behind common solutions. In this way a well-designed MSD facilitates the shared ownership over the REDD-plus readiness process and its results and therefore can help accelerate rather than stall action. However, even a well-designed MSD can inadvertently exclude traditionally marginalised groups. Special efforts are therefore required to identify and integrate forest dependent communities into consultation processes that conventionally tend to better accommodate stakeholders located in large urban centres, such as central government officials, national non-governmental organisations (NGOs), private sector associations and inter-governmental organisations (IGOs).

These special measures include:

- Making sure that the right groups are involved from early on in the process.
- Providing information to them about what REDD-plus will entail.
- Taking time to learn about the nature and extent of how they depend on forests.
- Making sure that community representatives have the opportunity to inform and consult with their own constituencies.
- Creating platforms that allow marginalised groups to engage directly with other more powerful stakeholders in transparent and ongoing dialogue.

Experience from work on pro-poor REDD-plus processes shows that preparations progress well in countries where governments have the capacity and the political will to provide guidance for the development of a national REDD-plus framework that takes into account the interests and views of the forest-dependent poor.



A pro-poor approach to REDD-plus

Many of the 1.6 billion people that depend on forests worldwide are among the poorest on earth. A pro-poor approach to REDD-plus requires a thorough understanding of the potential impact that REDD-plus activities could have on the livelihoods of vulnerable groups, including indigenous peoples, women and other forest dependent people and communities.

REDD-plus should not create an additional burden for these people. Instead, the contributions that marginalised groups make to the conservation, sustainable management and restoration of forest resources should be strengthened and rewarded through REDD-plus interventions. If REDD-plus is to fulfil its objectives with regards to delivering environmental and social co-benefits, the impacts on vulnerable communities and also their potential contributions must be taken into account.

IUCN is implementing a pro-poor REDD-plus project that encourages a focus on the interests of marginalised forest-dependent groups as part of the elaboration and implementation of national REDD-plus strategies. The project is supported by the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) and operates in Guatemala, Ghana, Cameroon, Uganda and Indonesia (Papua Province).

While the project is still in its early stages, the following building blocks for pro-poor REDD-plus approaches have been identified with the implementing partners in the five countries:

- Engagement of marginalised groups such as indigenous peoples, local communities and women in the design and implementation of REDD-plus strategies.
- Synergies between REDD-plus and governance reform processes that are in line with and contribute to national poverty-reduction strategies.
- Clear understanding of the forest-related dependencies of vulnerable groups.
- Equitable distribution of carbon rights and adequate legal frameworks for the building of benefit-sharing mechanisms.
- Participatory analyses of the drivers of deforestation.
- Support for the development of sustainable livelihoods that recognise the potential for community based options for sustainable management of forests.

Improving on stakeholder consultations

Stakeholder consultations are already widely seen as essential in developing national REDD-plus strategies. However, there is much room for improvement in the extent to which these are actually engaging all relevant stakeholders, particularly marginalised groups, or whether they are achieving the joint ownership of the process that is necessary for credible and implementable national REDD-plus strategies.

Years of experience in the forest sector and in relation to forest governance reform provide useful models for the development of national REDD-plus frameworks and have built a comprehensive understanding of effective multi-stakeholder processes.

Characteristics of enhanced multi-stakeholder dialogue (MSD) processes include:

- Moving beyond roundtables and one-off consultations. Enhanced MSD processes facilitate sustained, intensive direct interactions among broad sets of stakeholders over a prolonged time at different levels, such as national, sub-national and local.

- Proactively engaging vulnerable groups on an equal footing with stakeholders that represent other, more powerful interests. This can require capacity-building, improved access to information and other measures to level the playing field.
- Reaching new constituencies and bringing in new people and groups. This should include those actors who represent the drivers of deforestation that is affecting forest dependent communities.

The benefits of enhanced MSDs include:

- Helping to ensure that the interests of vulnerable groups are taken into account by achieving shared ownership over the process.
- Widening the pool of knowledge and capacities available to tackle the problem through the participation of and exchange among different stakeholders.
- Strengthening understanding of the dependency of forest communities on forest resources by engaging people at the grassroots level who have more advanced knowledge.
- Engagement of stakeholder groups who might otherwise block the REDD-plus readiness process because they have not been part of it.
- Engagement of actors who actually need to implement REDD-plus actions on the ground, e.g. who need to not cut down, or who need to restore, forests.

Experiences of the IUCN pro-poor REDD-plus project

In collaboration with local partners and governments, IUCN's pro-poor REDD-plus project is facilitating the preparation of multi-stakeholder dialogue processes (MSDs) in Ghana, Guatemala, Papua Province in Indonesia and Cameroon, in support of the development of REDD-plus strategies. (Work has not yet been initiated in Uganda.) Preparations for MSDs are taking place at local, sub-national and national levels and factor into the current government-led development of national REDD-plus strategies or, in the case of Papua Province, a sub-national strategy.

Ghana

In Ghana, official consultations mostly take place at the national level between government officials, large NGOs and IGOs located in the capital. In most cases there is no concerted effort to engage local communities in REDD-plus discussions. Decision makers tend to overlook key knowledge on forest-dependency that is readily available on the ground, at the local level and even among district level bureaucrats. There is also an urgent lack of realistic understanding of the possible benefits of REDD-plus on the ground and the activities that implementation of REDD-plus will require from actors that hope to share in any benefits. The pro-poor project concentrates on bridging the information gap and encourages two-way flows of information between the government and stakeholders, and between various stakeholders. Civil society and local communities play an important role in providing feedback on issues such as tree tenure and carbon rights. Stakeholder dialogue platforms are established to address these and other challenges, and a beginning is made to carry the input over to the national level. Ghana has the opportunity to build on lessons learned from the exemplary MSD process that was carried out as part of the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) negotiation with the European Union to eliminate illegal logging, but to do this effectively more resources will need to be made available from current REDD-readiness funds.

Guatemala

Indigenous organisations and civil society organisations from the northwest of the country are in the process of developing a regional consultation model as a contribution towards the preparation of the system for Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MRV). The pro-poor project supported the analysis of the legal framework required for the clarification of the rights over carbon, which has been recognised by both the government as well as the indigenous groups as crucial for building an equitable and effective mechanism for sharing REDD-plus benefits. The framework will feed into a proposal for REDD-plus financial mechanisms, which will form the basis for later consultations with other key stakeholder groups. This experience is interesting not only because local organisations were consulted for the analysis of the aforementioned legal framework, but because these grassroots organisations encouraged and strengthened capacity of the government of Guatemala in its development of the readiness phase.

Papua Province in Indonesia

Multi-stakeholder meetings are contributing to the revision of policies on spatial planning and forest management which will help to address critical resource management issues such as: 1) conflicts in forest management and the issue of indigenous peoples' rights, and 2) land and carbon tenure rights that are important to define benefit sharing mechanisms. These processes are helping provincial level policy makers to articulate the interests of indigenous peoples and vulnerable groups in a way that is acceptable to policy makers at the national level. At the grassroots, marginalised communities are in urgent need of clear information about alternatives to the prevailing industrial models of natural resource use, including the challenges and opportunities of REDD-plus. Several REDD-related projects and programs have been proposed by a variety of parties, and a Low Carbon Development Task Force (Papua Province) as well as a REDD Working Group (West Papua province) have been formed. However, coordination between actors and stakeholder consultation processes need to be improved to ensure that Papua has a clear, solid REDD-plus strategy that recognises local rights and aspirations and contributes to the national readiness process. The high costs of travel and communication across Papua mean that mobilising sufficient resources is an essential part of ensuring that the voices of indigenous communities are heard within the REDD debate.

Cameroon

The pro-poor project is developing a mechanism for the consultation of vulnerable groups, such as indigenous peoples and women, and is promoting their representation at the landscape, regional and national level. The government is encouraged to ensure the representation of vulnerable groups in the National REDD-plus Committee. In collaboration with local NGOs, indigenous and women's organisations, two rounds of discussions were organised with vulnerable groups at the community level to collect information. The focus of these meetings was the interest of these groups with regards to decision making processes and forest resource management issues. The sessions were also used to map and address the most urgent needs that groups have for information on the potential opportunities and challenges of REDD-plus. The information collected is analysed and used to build a mechanism for consultation and participation, and to define criteria for self-selection and representation of vulnerable groups in regional REDD-plus forums. Early proposals of the consultation model are shared with local partners for input before further testing. Eventually they will be presented to the national REDD-plus committee for wide application in the country.

Summary of lessons learned so far

These preliminary observations from the work to date indicate the challenges and opportunities involved in building MSDs that by representing the interests and concerns of vulnerable groups as well as other stakeholders can contribute to more effective REDD-plus interventions.

- **Tap into local expertise and knowledge, particularly on such issues as forest dependencies:** Enhanced MSD processes can contribute to the generation of new, relevant information because new stakeholders brought into dialogue on REDD-plus represent expertise present at local and sub-national levels that is often overlooked at the national level, such as on forest dependency and tree tenure in Ghana and legal rights over carbon in Guatemala. Understanding of such issues is critical to identify who has to be consulted and to design REDD-plus activities that are able to deliver co-benefits.
- **Strengthen understanding of the potential benefits, challenges and impacts of REDD-plus implementation through targeted communications.** There is inadequate knowledge of what the potential benefits could be of REDD-plus for different groups of actors, or of the potential impacts on local livelihoods, and also of the activities that will actually be required to be implemented on the ground, for example in Ghana and Cameroon.
- **Map information needs and clarify feedback loops.** The two-way flow of information encouraged, and sustained through enhanced MSD processes, is particularly crucial for informing the development of national REDD-plus strategies because key decision makers at that level often lack understanding of the way vulnerable groups depend on forest resources. At the grassroots level such as in Cameroon and Papua Province on the other hand knowledge about REDD-plus and possible opportunities and implications for marginalised groups is inadequate.
- **Strengthen the capacities of vulnerable and marginalised groups before the consultations begin.** In many cases, the capacity of stakeholders to negotiate and conduct self-selection has to be strengthened before effective MSDs can take place between vulnerable stakeholders and more powerful groups, for example, in Cameroon.
- **Ensure clear road maps for the elaboration of national (or sub-national) REDD-plus strategies are in place to provide a framework for consultation processes.** Civil society initiatives, such as in Guatemala, can help shape and encourage national REDD-plus debate but in situations with weaker levels of organisation among grassroots and other civil society organisations, such as in Papua Province, there is an urgent need for a clear national and sub-national REDD-plus road-map within which MSDs are prepared and implemented.
- **Commit adequate resources to MSD processes.** There is an urgent lack of resources in every case. Commitments to consultation and participation need to be matched by appropriate dedication of financial and human resources. For REDD-plus to succeed, investment in consultation and capacity building must match investment in carbon counting systems for REDD-plus.

Effective multi-stakeholder dialogue processes that address issues of forest dependency, governance, legal frameworks and rights will make it possible for REDD-plus to contribute to the closing of 'benefit gaps'. This will help ensure that marginalised groups such as indigenous peoples, women and other forest dependent communities are able to obtain a fair share of REDD benefits. This will, in turn, greatly enhance crucial support for REDD-plus, not only at the stage of design but also at the time of implementation.



For further information, please contact:

Consuelo Espinosa
consuelo.espinosa@iucn.org

**INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR
CONSERVATION OF NATURE**

Washington D.C. Office
1630 Connecticut Avenue, NW
3rd Floor,
Washington DC 20009
USA

Tel +1 202 387 4826

Fax +1 202 387 4823

www.iucn.org



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