**REDD+ Policies**

*REDD+ Policies* examines how REDD+ is unfolding in the national policy arena.

The overarching aim of REDD+ is to help mitigate global climate change, by creating incentives for countries to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases caused by deforestation and forest degradation.

But if REDD+ is to realize its full mitigation potential, the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation must be addressed. This will entail reforms of policies, practices and processes at the national level.

National governments in REDD+ countries are adapting or introducing relevant policies. However, whether or not those policies are effective will be determined by numerous factors: the attitudes of political actors, how those actors understand and respond to REDD+, the way institutions are set up, and existing laws and practices.

By analyzing the drivers, agents, institutions and public discourses that are shaping the context of REDD+ in several countries, we seek to understand what change is needed to create REDD+ regimes whose outcomes are effective, efficient and equitable, and how that change can be achieved.

**Global Comparative Study on REDD+**
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Some policies from outside the forestry sector indirectly drive deforestation and forest degradation. These include national development goals, energy and food security targets, and entrenched support for extractive industries. These policies are often based on accepted national development paradigms and existing policy frameworks or objectives — they reflect “the way things are done”, so any challenge to them would be controversial and meet with resistance. Existing frameworks can incorporate regulations and policies that support REDD+, but dismantling existing power structures and rent-seeking behaviors will often require major reforms.

In many cases, powerful economic interests and power structures lie behind the key drivers of deforestation: they reinforce the status quo and create barriers to change. In most countries, the main drivers of deforestation command very high rents. Large-scale commercial enterprises in particular can wield considerable power because of the wealth involved and their close connections to bureaucratic structures — and the State itself has economic and political interests in the exploitation and conversion of forest. This means that a number of powerful political and economic actors would prefer to continue “business as usual”.

Achieving transformational change will involve dealing with the following:

- Insufficient coordination, both vertical and horizontal, among government bodies, which inflates transaction costs and impedes efforts to cross sectoral boundaries
- Limited involvement of vulnerable groups, which leads to inadequate representation, inequity and possible conflicts
- Corruption and elite capture of land and benefits, which render policies ineffective and lead to inequity, inefficiency and possible conflicts
- Limited autonomy of the State from powerful private sector interests
- International actors as the sole driving force, which results in lack of national ownership and makes it harder to formulate and implement effective national REDD+ policies
- Weak administrative and technical capacity, which limits a country’s ability to implement and enforce policies, laws and financial or other management systems.

New economic incentives, new information, growing public concern about climate change, and new actors and coalitions – these all have the potential to generate transformational change.
Change must come from within

Transformational change requires a strong challenge to “business as usual” — tackling the powerful, entrenched interests behind the main drivers of deforestation and breaking away from the traditional policy model and processes. If this challenge to the status quo is to overcome the obstacles, it must come from broad and inclusive alliances within the country. Building these domestic constituencies for change will take proactive efforts, and not only from civil society. Two elements in particular will help these coalitions for change to succeed:

- the support of state and business elites that have decision-making authority or can influence policy decisions
- technical expertise and capacity to challenge the traditional policy model and show how to harmonize REDD+ with development goals.

REDD+ is a game changer

New economic incentives, new information, growing public concern about climate change, and new actors and coalitions — these all have the potential to generate transformational change. Just the idea of REDD+ has stimulated the entry of new actors, including businesses focused on carbon and “green” investments, state agencies, and marginalized groups such as indigenous and forest-dependent people. These newcomers are gaining prominence in the policy arena, where they compete with established actors to realize their interests. A new perspective on the value of “standing forest” is emerging, incorporating old and new actors, interests and issues.
References


Further reading


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