

# Analysing REDD+

## Challenges and choices

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## Summary and conclusions

### REDD+ without regrets

Frances Seymour and Arild Angelsen

- Changes in REDD+ over the past five years have led to significant shifts in the size and composition of financing and the likely pace and cost of implementation, as well as to the divergence of interests across actors and levels. Challenges resulting from these changes include increased ‘aid-ification,’ sequencing problems faced by project proponents and uncertain rewards from REDD+ efforts by forest countries and communities.
- Lessons learned from the first generation of REDD+ initiatives include the importance of the jurisdictional scale in between national and local levels for land use decision making, the need for cross-scale coordination to address issues such as tenure, benefit sharing and monitoring and the tenacity of interests and institutions associated with business as usual.
- To move forward, REDD+ objectives must be clarified and strategies developed to bridge the financial gap created by the lack of a new international climate agreement. Pending greater certainty regarding the future of REDD+, priority should be given to ‘no regrets’ policy reforms that are desirable, regardless of climate objectives, and to building constituencies and capacities critical to the eventual success of REDD+.

## 18.1 Introduction

The preceding chapters provide a snapshot of the state of play in REDD+ and summarise preliminary research findings from CIFOR's Global Comparative Study on REDD+ (GCS) from selected national policy arenas and project sites. This chapter summarises and synthesises the key themes that emerge from earlier chapters and builds on them to look ahead to the challenges and choices facing REDD+ policy makers, practitioners and researchers.

REDD+, and the context in which it operates, have undergone important changes since it officially became part of the international climate change agenda at COP11 in 2005. Most significantly, a new international agreement on climate change has not yet been achieved (Section 18.2). This changed context has major implications for the way that REDD+ will unfold over the coming years (Section 18.3). In addition, several lessons can be learned from the first generation of REDD+ projects and policy reforms (Section 18.4). The uncertainty over the future of REDD+ may lead to inaction, but we argue that a wide range of 'no regrets' REDD+ policy reforms would be worthwhile, regardless of the future of REDD+ and should be implemented to achieve objectives beyond climate mitigation (Section 18.5). Finally, we provide some concluding thoughts on REDD+ (Section 18.6).

## 18.2 Changes in the context for REDD+

The idea of avoided deforestation as a climate change mitigation strategy was tabled and rejected during UNFCCC negotiations related to the Kyoto Protocol in 1997. As a result, the forest-related activities included in the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) were limited to afforestation and reforestation. A decade later, a number of changes made it possible to include what came to be known as REDD+ in the Bali Road Map at COP13 in 2007. These changes included:

- A change in political framing. When reduced emissions from deforestation was again tabled at the COP11 negotiations in 2005, it was done so by developing countries and in the context of national action, thus bridging the North–South divide.
- A new sense of the urgency and importance of including deforestation and forest degradation, following the IPCC Fourth Assessment Report's (IPCC 2007c) illumination of the significance of emissions from land use change.
- The publication of analyses stressing the low cost of reducing emissions as compared to other mitigation options.
- Improvements in technology, which made methods available for measuring changes in emissions from deforestation and, potentially at least, forest degradation.

Thus, the idea of REDD+ began to take shape as a climate change mitigation strategy that could be promoted as effective, efficient and equitable.

In the run-up to COP15 in Copenhagen in 2009, when a new post-2012 international climate agreement still seemed feasible, there was a sense that REDD+ was one of those rare issues offering something for everyone: deeper overall emissions cuts for a given level of global spending on mitigation, cost efficient offsets for industrialised countries, significant new financial flows for developing countries and, if designed correctly, the co-benefits of biodiversity conservation and poverty reduction. It was widely expected that this alignment of interests at the global level would lead to a binding post-2012 agreement, including REDD+ performance-based finance that would flow down to create incentives for national REDD+ policies and local projects in a two-tier, payments for ecosystem services (PES)-like model (Angelsen and Wertz-Kanounnikoff 2008).

Three years later, the outlook for REDD+ is quite different.

The pre-Copenhagen expectations for how REDD+ would play out have not been met. In part, this resulted from the fact that the global community failed at COP15 to reach an overall climate agreement to replace the Kyoto Protocol, and will not now do so before 2015 at the earliest (Chapter 3). The prospects for significant REDD+ finance generated by a carbon market under such an agreement have correspondingly declined. While negotiations continue to make incremental progress on global REDD+ architecture, the relative importance of the UNFCCC as a top-down driver of the necessary finance and rules for REDD+ has diminished significantly. As a result, there are now multiple REDD+ policy arenas populated by aid agencies, big international NGOs and various domestic actors. The participants in these arenas often compete for funding, leadership in standard setting and influence over the discourse on how REDD+ should be defined.

Another set of changes arose from the fact that REDD+ emerged just as the world entered a period of economic and financial turmoil. In the mid-2000s, the global economy experienced a commodity price boom, with prices for food, fuel and metals reaching unprecedented levels. These high prices – and the associated fears about food and energy insecurity – led to a global rush to secure access to land for agriculture and minerals development (Chapter 4). Increased competition for forestland will probably increase the costs of REDD+ and outpace the improvements in land use planning necessary for it to be considered as an option. Then, the global financial crisis that struck in 2008 distracted attention away from climate change; pressure on national budgets will probably constrain the volume of aid funds available to bridge the REDD+ financing gap caused by the lack of an international climate change agreement.

## 18.3 Implications of the changed context

The changed context for REDD+ has slowed down the pace of implementation and has introduced a higher level of uncertainty regarding whether and how the original idea will be realised.

### 18.3.1 The ‘aid-ification’ of REDD+

With the prospect of large-scale market-based finance for REDD+ postponed until at least 2020, the current dominance of the institutions and sources of funding associated with traditional development aid is likely to continue for the foreseeable future. This has a number of implications for REDD+, including a broadening of its objectives, types of interventions and performance criteria (Chapter 13). It entails the risk of repeating past mistakes associated with development assistance (Chapter 7). While there has been some recent experimentation with cash on delivery assistance models, aid agency policies and procedures – and in some cases the politics and budgetary procedures of development assistance funding in donor countries – may be incompatible with the result-based payment systems envisioned for REDD+.

REDD+ financing roles have sometimes proven uncomfortable for donor agencies, as has been the case with the World Bank’s role as channel for Norwegian funds to Guyana. As described in Chapter 13, attention has only recently turned to the need for performance indicators for the first two phases of national REDD+ implementation, with wide scope for disagreement on appropriate standards and processes for measuring achievement. The risk that good partnership is valued higher than actual performance threatens both the effectiveness and efficiency of REDD+.

Reliance on aid funding for REDD+ also creates a broader scope that includes development objectives, leading to a relative decrease in the emphasis on climate protection through emission reductions and a relative increase in emphasis on co-benefits, especially poverty reduction. From a political perspective, REDD+ in the donor–recipient framing of aid – rather than as a transaction among equal partners in the context of an international agreement – creates an unfortunate domestic political dynamic in recipient countries and raises sovereignty concerns.

Taken together, these factors suggest that the ‘aid-ification’ of REDD+ increasingly leads to a decoupling of REDD+ finance from performance-based payments for emission reductions, which was central to the original idea. Performance-based payments for co-benefits closely tied to REDD+ objectives – such as strengthening community-level tenure over forests – offer one possible avenue for maintaining the link. REDD+ policies and projects

will become increasingly diversified, just like development aid itself, and could be unified only by having reduced emissions as one among several goals.

### 18.3.2 Sequencing problems

A wide variety of public, private and NGO project proponents heeded the call by the 2007 Bali Action Plan for Parties to undertake REDD+ demonstration activities. More than 200 REDD+ projects are now underway in some 43 countries (Chapter 12). Project proponents were eager to make progress as rapidly as possible, in order to position their initiatives to take advantage of the REDD+ financing expected after COP15 in 2009.

The failure to conclude an overall climate agreement in Copenhagen and the relatively slow pace of national-level REDD+ policy development have left these projects in a precarious position in a number of ways. As described in Chapter 10, the uncertainty of REDD+ finance is leading some project proponents to hedge their bets by shifting the relative focus of their efforts to traditional integrated conservation and development project (ICDP) activities. Such approaches risk decoupling REDD+ from performance-based PES and repeating the limited success of the previous generation of ICDPs.

They also risk outpacing protracted international negotiations on rules for measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) and safeguards. An assessment of early REDD+ projects suggests that most of the MRV methods being deployed do not meet current Verified Carbon Standard (VCS) standards, which could be a model for future negotiated standards (Chapter 14). Additionally, uncertainty is leading some project proponents to hold back on fully disclosing information about the potential financial flows that might be realised through REDD+; in doing so they risk failing to comply fully with the principles of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC), which are likely to be included in future safeguard regimes.

Early REDD+ pilot projects are being put at risk by the slow development of national-level legal and regulatory frameworks. Legal certainty over who owns forest carbon rights, and regulatory certainty about sharing REDD+ costs and benefits across levels and stakeholders, remain elusive (Chapter 8). Although tenure has emerged as a key issue at many project sites, there is limited evidence of the serious national attention needed to resolve tenure insecurity and conflict (Chapter 9). While some interventions can be implemented under existing tenure conditions, in the absence of reform, such interventions are limited in scope, effectiveness and efficiency, and may also lead to more inequitable distributional outcomes.

### 18.3.3 Countries and communities left facing risk

Increased uncertainty regarding the timing and size of international REDD+ financial flows, coupled with economic changes leading to increased competition for forestland, have shifted the calculation of REDD+ risk and reward at both the national and local levels. The credibility of the win–win promise of REDD+ (i.e. that the costs of reducing deforestation and forest degradation will be compensated) is in danger of erosion.

For REDD+ to be successful at the national level, constituencies for transformational change must prevail over interests in business as usual (Chapter 2). Slow progress in the UNFCCC negotiations has weakened the hand of the former (by postponing the prospect of large-scale international finance in the long term), while economic changes have strengthened the hand of the latter (by increasing the opportunity cost of forest protection). To the extent that REDD+ requires actions that go beyond no regrets development strategies, governments poised to move beyond the readiness phase into setting policies and measures that reduce deforestation and forest degradation need a reliable source of long-term international finance that cannot be provided at the necessary scale by development assistance (Chapter 7).

Changes in the context for REDD+ have also affected risk calculations at the local level. REDD+ project proponents have begun repositioning their projects for the possibility that expected financial flows do not materialise (Chapter 10). The concern expressed by villagers in Indonesia – that REDD+ projects will not be able to prevent large companies from converting local forests to other uses – is consistent with our understanding of broader economic forces. It is telling that the villagers surveyed understand REDD+ projects to be aimed at forest protection, with their hopes and worries focused on the potential impact on their incomes (Chapter 11). This suggests that they are not confident of a direct positive link between forest protection and livelihoods in proposed REDD+ schemes.

## 18.4 Lessons from first generation REDD+ initiatives

The changes in context for a second generation of REDD+ initiatives are not limited to those resulting from the status of UNFCCC negotiations and global economic conditions. In addition, new (or newly-affirmed) knowledge and understanding derived from the first generation of REDD+ initiatives are emerging as well.

### 18.4.1 REDD+ costs more and takes more time than expected

REDD+ initiatives are costing more and taking more time to implement than was originally expected. Perhaps not surprisingly for those with experience of

the institutions and governance systems characteristic of the forestry sector in developing countries, many REDD+ targets and timelines announced in 2007 have proved unrealistic. In particular, it appears that the time needed for stakeholder consultation and consensus building has often been underestimated (Chapter 7).

The Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) originally offered grants of US \$3.6 million per country for REDD+ readiness activities, based on an initial estimate of the costs of developing a REDD+ strategy and monitoring system. This estimate contrasts with later country proposals that requested an average of US \$15–20 million, reflecting both a broadening of the range of activities included and a deepening of countries' understanding of REDD+ requirements – such as the need for greater attention to institutional arrangements for managing REDD+ funds, social and environmental safeguards and stakeholder consultations (personal communication, Ken Andrasko, World Bank FCPF).

We have previously recognised the dilemma that “REDD+ is urgent...but cannot be rushed” (Seymour and Angelsen 2009). The need for national ownership (Chapter 5) means that REDD+ must be grounded in a legitimate domestic political process; in the light of continuing uncertainty regarding the contours of the international regime, transformational change at the national level is unlikely to come quickly or easily. As a result, the REDD+ community is faced with the irony that, although long-term financing is a critical concern, donors have found it difficult to spend fast-start money (Chapter 7). Given the internal and external pressures on donor agencies to move money, this could be interpreted as a positive sign that the linking of REDD+ funds to performance is being taken seriously.

In addition to the longer-than-expected timelines for REDD+ decision making processes, gaps in data availability and capacity to support the technical requirements of REDD+ are turning out to be larger than originally thought. Despite the advances in technology that helped move deforestation in developing countries back onto the UNFCCC negotiating table between the COPs in Kyoto and Bali, and an early focus of REDD+ readiness investments in MRV, significant gaps persist (Chapter 14). Most forest countries do not yet have the data, the capacity or the political will (e.g. to share and disclose data) that they need to fully support a performance-based payment system.

There has been progress on the application of remote sensing technologies to detect deforestation and forest degradation. However, the data required to calculate the emission factors needed to translate changes in forest condition to changes in emissions are altogether missing for large areas of the world's forests (Chapter 15). There has been conceptual progress towards establishing

robust reference emission levels (RELs), but progress within countries has been slow, due to a lack of data and inherent uncertainties in predicting business as usual emission scenarios (Chapter 16). Despite investments in readiness activities, so far there have only been modest improvements in the technical capacities of institutions responsible for MRV.

The slower-than-expected pace and higher-than-expected costs also have implications for the politics of REDD+ at the national level in both donor and REDD+ countries, putting REDD+ proponents on the defensive. The Governments of Norway and Indonesia faced uncomfortable scrutiny as the 2010 year-end deadline for issuing a moratorium on new forest concessions came and went, without an announcement until May 2011. In early 2012, the Government of Australia faced criticism by academics (Olbrei and Howes 2012) and the media (Hamann 2012) for the limited apparent progress of a high-profile REDD+ project funded by AusAID in Kalimantan, Indonesia.

### **18.4.2 Tenacity of business as usual institutions, interests and ideas**

Another set of lessons learned from the first generation of REDD+ initiatives – although not entirely unexpected – concerns the difficulty of challenging those actors with vested interests in business as usual, the complexity of retrofitting existing institutions for new purposes – or creating new ones – and the effort needed to dislodge established ideas regarding how forests should be managed and by whom.

As shown by the media analysis conducted for the GCS, the discourse on REDD+ at the national level has been dominated by state actors, who may voice the interests of the corporate sector (Chapter 5). Proposals to weaken the Forest Code in Brazil, and the narrow scope of the moratorium in Indonesia (Box 2.1), can be understood as effective pushback from those who see their interests threatened by REDD+. The relative lack of emphasis so far in national REDD+ strategy discussions on the need to clarify forest tenure and carbon rights suggests an avoidance of changes that might threaten the *status quo*.

We have previously observed the dilemma that REDD+ “must be new... but build on what has gone before” (Seymour and Angelsen 2009). This dilemma is especially acute when choosing institutions for new REDD+ functions. Where existing institutions have taken the lead, they have tended to reproduce previous patterns in addressing new REDD+ challenges. This holds true not only at the international level (e.g. how multilateral donor agencies have programmed REDD+ funds) and the national level (e.g. how ministries of forestry have adapted REDD+ to their existing forest

management paradigms), but also at the project level, where conservation-oriented NGOs have selected sites in accordance with biodiversity-related objectives (Chapter 12), and are implementing ICDP-like activities (Chapter 10). To many actors, REDD+ has become a new source of funding for pre-existing activities, with a slight relabelling to fit the climate agenda.

But establishing new institutions for REDD+ is also difficult. New REDD+ entities face challenges to their authority and legitimacy, and the process of establishing new REDD+ financial mechanisms has been accompanied by delays and frustration (Chapter 7). At the same time, a positive outcome of REDD+ in many countries has been to open up dialogues on forest management beyond the ministries directly responsible, with REDD+ task forces growing to involve ministries of finance and planning, other line ministries and civil society.

### 18.4.3 Cross-scale issues

A third set of lessons emerging from the first generation of REDD+ initiatives concerns the significance of the cross-scale coordination needed to achieve the objectives of effectiveness, efficiency and equity. The utility of ‘polycentric’ institutions in forest governance (Ostrom 2010) and a ‘nested approach’ to REDD+ implementation (Pedroni *et al.* 2007) have been long recognised. Recent experience has further illuminated the specific issues and challenges requiring linkage across scales, the relative importance of different levels of governance for different functions and the divergence of interests across those levels.

A review of the first generation of REDD+ initiatives suggests many lost opportunities for national and local-level experiences to inform each other. Project proponents appear in some cases to have intentionally avoided engagement with nebulous national-level REDD+ policies and institutions, thus missing the chance to shape them. On the other hand, national-level REDD+ policy makers have not consistently looked to project-level experience as a source of insight regarding on-the-ground realities.

The analysis presented in this volume thus points to the need for increased vertical integration of REDD+ and better efforts by REDD+ champions to work across scales. Chapter 6 provides examples of obstacles faced by cross-scale MRV and leakage control efforts in Brazil, Indonesia and Vietnam, but also some promising approaches for overcoming those obstacles. Addressing forest tenure constraints on REDD+ (Chapter 9) and ensuring compliance with safeguards (Chapter 17) will both require increased coordination between the national and local levels to ensure that policy frameworks are grounded in local realities and that the objectives of those policies are realised at the local level.

The distribution of costs and benefits is perhaps the largest test facing effective multilevel governance in the context of REDD+. Fundamental questions regarding who should benefit from REDD+ financial flows – and on what basis and through what form of compensation – have not yet been answered and different stakeholders at different levels have different views on the right answers (Chapter 8). As discussed in Chapter 3, the power of REDD+ as an idea has, in part, been due to the ability of every stakeholder to project his or her vision of what REDD+ will mean in practice. Getting specific about benefit sharing will be a stringent test of the idea’s resilience. Elaborating the options and implications of alternative benefit sharing mechanisms is thus one of the highest priorities for further REDD+ research and experimentation. And, since there is no simple or agreed-upon formula to use in designing the benefit sharing mechanisms, the legitimacy of the process becomes critical.

Finally, early REDD+ experience has highlighted the importance of the jurisdictional scale, i.e. the subnational level between national policies and local projects. It is at this meso-level jurisdictional scale that much decision making about land use takes place and where some of the more promising REDD+ initiatives – such as those in Brazil – are taking shape.

## 18.5 Navigating an uncertain REDD+ future

The uncertainty over the future of REDD+, caused not least by the slowness of UNFCCC negotiations overall and changed global economic conditions, means that REDD+ must increasingly be justified on the basis of its prospective contributions to multiple objectives at multiple levels, and not just global climate change mitigation. REDD+ cannot for the foreseeable future depend on a top-down flow of incentives for change, so its supporters need to invest more in bottom-up strategies to build constituencies for change that do not depend on a binding global agreement or significant finance in the near term.

Some might respond to this uncertainty with a wait-and-see approach. We believe that a better approach is to ask three questions: i) what can be done to build broad political support for REDD+? ii) what are the highest priority actions for building the foundation for eventual REDD+ success? and iii) what are the actions that would be useful to implement anyway, whatever scenarios of international REDD+ funding and global economic development materialise?

We address these three questions in the following subsections. Table 18.1 provides a summary of priority actions arranged by level.

### 18.5.1 Building broad political support for REDD+

**Reframe REDD+ as an objective rather than a forestry programme.** One of the successes of REDD+ so far is the high level of awareness it has created – beyond narrow climate and forest policy circles – of the significance of forest-related emissions. An international consensus that such emissions should be reduced stands, with or without a specific financial mechanism under the UNFCCC, and thus is a legitimate objective to be included in public policy across sectors and levels. In particular, the shift in the North–South politics of climate negotiations – in which middle-income countries are expected to shoulder more of the costs of mitigation – means that actions to reduce forest-based emissions in those countries cannot expect full international compensation (Chapters 3 and 7).

Thus, rather than allowing the REDD+ idea to be defined as calling for sector-based REDD+ *programmes*, which are often confined to the forestry sector, supporters need to reframe reduced forest-based emissions as an *objective* to be achieved in a broader context. Such an approach is fully consistent with UNFCCC texts, as well as with the buzzwords that have gained currency in the context of Rio+20 (including ‘low carbon development,’ ‘green economy’ and ‘climate-smart agriculture’) and the broad-based approaches to sustainable development that they signify. Liberating REDD+ from the confines of the forestry sector – and from a definition limited to payments for verified emission reductions – is also a precondition for addressing many of the extra-sectoral drivers of deforestation.

**Invest in political legitimacy.** Despite the international consensus on the urgency of reducing forest-based emissions, slow progress in UNFCCC negotiations, the assertion that forest protection is contrary to development, broader attacks on climate science and the increasing reliance of REDD+ on aid, all threaten its political legitimacy in both donor and recipient countries. For REDD+ to maintain its legitimacy, it will be necessary to keep moving forward, and to do so in ways that strengthen rather than undermine confidence in its integrity and its fairness, both within and between countries.

At the global level, achieving legitimacy will require progress towards real reductions in emissions, which implies addressing long-standing challenges of additionality, leakage and permanence. Globally accepted rules on reference emission levels and MRV need to be grounded in sound science and, to the extent possible, unadulterated by politics, even while adjusting those rules to take into account national circumstances in the interest of fairness.

At the national level, political legitimacy will require REDD+ constituencies that are sufficiently broad and deep to be resilient to the inevitable setbacks that will happen as REDD+ policies begin to challenge business as usual

Table 18.1 Priority actions by type and level

Level	Constituency building	Foundations for success	No regrets
<b>International</b>	Accelerate progress toward consensus on performance-based financing mechanisms and reference emission levels in UNFCCC negotiations (Chapter 16).	Secure existing sources and identify new sources of public finance for REDD+ and develop private sector investment opportunities (Chapter 7).  Develop performance indicators for REDD+ Phases 1 (readiness) and 2 (policy) (Chapter 13).  Finalise MRV modalities to set international standards for reporting and verification (Chapters 14, 15).	Improve the availability of spatial data and emission factors (Chapter 15).
<b>National</b>	Support national-level constituencies for transformational change (Chapter 5).  Ensure legitimacy of decision making through attention to REDD+ processes and institutions (Chapters 5, 8).	Improve legal certainty regarding forest carbon rights (Chapter 8).  Fill gaps in data and capacity for MRV.	Pursue no regrets fiscal policies, e.g. removing perverse subsidies.  Establish cabinet-level dialogues to address extra-sectoral drivers of deforestation, e.g. agriculture and mining.  Incorporate tenure reform/clarification into national development strategies (Chapter 9).

<p><b>Jurisdictional</b></p>	<p>Support integrated land-use planning processes and develop tools for managing tradeoffs among food and energy production, ecosystem services provision and conservation objectives (Chapter 4).</p>	<p>Incorporate experimental design for performance-based finance.</p>	<p>Strengthen local institutions and enforcement power.</p> <p>Invest in institution building for spatial analysis, planning and information collection.</p> <p>Generate and disseminate knowledge on the role of forests in supporting agricultural productivity and climate resilience.</p>
<p><b>Project</b></p>	<p>Ensure adequate attention to local needs for livelihoods and information.</p>	<p>Incorporate experimental design for PES.</p>	<p>Invest in capacity building for local communities to participate in MRV activities to increase transparency and commitment (Chapter 15).</p>
<p><b>Cross-scale</b></p>	<p>Reframe REDD+ as an objective rather than a forestry programme at all levels.</p> <p>Ensure devolution of REDD+ decision making to the appropriate level.</p> <p>Assess the costs of REDD+ and who bears them, and develop benefit sharing mechanisms to address different interests (Chapter 8).</p> <p>Incorporate attention to safeguards (Chapter 17).</p>	<p>Improve vertical and horizontal coordination among government institutions relevant to REDD+ implementation (Chapter 6).</p> <p>Develop intermediary institutions for accumulation and transmission of information from the ground to national-level institutions (Chapter 6).</p>	

interests and the possible scandals – such as misappropriation of REDD+ funds – that will inevitably accompany action on the ground. Serious attention to safeguards is necessary, both to avoid substantive harm as well as damage to the reputation of REDD+. Legitimacy will also depend on the perceived integrity of the process to determine and implement REDD+ benefit sharing mechanisms.

**Cultivate broader constituencies for REDD+.** Political reality makes it imperative to include economic development goals in the climate agenda, so that REDD+ can enjoy broad and sustainable support. REDD+ has been such a powerful idea in part because of its promise to deliver on multiple objectives. Often mentioned co-benefits include biodiversity conservation, poverty reduction and improved governance, but the mobilisation of constituencies for these objectives in REDD+ policy arenas has been uneven. Indeed, some constituencies have lined up to oppose REDD+ on the basis that it may undermine the rights and tenure of forest communities. Some clear examples of REDD+ initiatives leading to stronger rights and tenure, coupled with serious attention to safeguards, could build confidence that it is more of a promise than a threat.

In addition, and consistent with the reframing of REDD+ proposed above, more attention could be given to the benefits of maintaining forests at the landscape scale. Discourses on food security continue to wrongly characterise forests as impediments to increased agricultural production through extensification; greater efforts are needed to disseminate existing knowledge and generate new knowledge regarding the importance of forest-based ecosystem services to agricultural productivity. The role of forests in buffering economic interests from the impacts of climate change – a key component of strategies for adaptation – continues to be grossly underappreciated. Demonstrating the contribution of REDD+ to objectives such as maintaining agricultural productivity and climate resilience could help counter the persistent framing of forest protection as being opposed to development.

## 18.5.2 Priority actions for building foundations for success

**Maintain link to PES, but in association with other tools.** There are many reasons to fear that a weakening of payment for performance as a key attribute of REDD+ will reduce its effectiveness, making it no different than previous forestry sector interventions (such as ICDPs) that have enjoyed limited success. Thus, it will be critical to assemble various sources of finance – including voluntary carbon markets, domestic finance and development assistance – to bridge the gap to the anticipated global compliance market for forest carbon credits and to begin to demonstrate payment for performance at both international/national and national/subnational scales.

But with the likelihood of lower than expected finance, at least in the short term, and the rising prices of commodities that compete for the same land, it is clear that REDD+ cannot depend on cash flows and PES instruments only. Maintaining an optimal forest cover in the landscape – from the perspective of global climate mitigation and biodiversity conservation objectives, as well as more local livelihood and ecosystem services objectives – will require a skilful combination of instruments, including traditional command and control, law enforcement approaches, fiscal incentives and smarter infrastructure development and land use planning.

**Focus on key bottlenecks impeding progress.** The number of problems to be solved in order to achieve effective, efficient and equitable REDD+ outcomes can seem daunting. It is important, therefore, to target investment to removing key bottlenecks at the policy level and filling key gaps in the knowledge and capacity needed for REDD+ implementation.

At the global level, negotiators should give priority to speeding up progress on financing mechanisms and other implementation modalities. At the national level, REDD+ supporters should focus on building constituencies for transformational policy change, including outreach to the progressive business sector, which hitherto has been relatively neglected, as well as to constituencies for forest tenure reform. Across scales, continued investment is needed to assemble the nuts and bolts of MRV systems, including filling current gaps in data and capacity.

**Shift relative emphasis to cross-scale and jurisdictional-level efforts.** The first generation of REDD+ initiatives (and associated research) has tended to focus on national-level policy processes and local-level pilot projects, with perhaps an overemphasis on projects and a suboptimal level of interaction between the two. Going forward, greater attention should be given to the jurisdictional scale as the locus of critical land use planning processes and the space where increased transparency and public participation processes would be desirable even in the absence of REDD+. In addition, more investment is needed in mechanisms to facilitate cross-scale linkages, not least in the design of policies and institutions for REDD+ benefit sharing.

### 18.5.3 No regret policy reforms

There are a number of forest-related and other reforms that would represent good public policy even if they did not generate forest emissions reductions as an additional benefit. In addition, the information, institutions and capacities needed for REDD+ are also necessary to serve other societal objectives.

**Clarify land tenure.** The clarification of land tenure would lead to more efficient land use, stimulate investment to raise agricultural productivity and

contribute to economic development. Critically, the resolution of conflicts over land would also remove a key source of violence in rural areas.

**Remove perverse subsidies.** Agents of deforestation are often the beneficiaries of cheap credit, infrastructure, tax breaks and other incentives provided by the state. The removal of such subsidies would lead to a more efficient allocation of resources and create fiscal space in government budgets, while also building constituencies for improved forest management in ministries of finance.

**Strengthen the rule of law.** Reducing opportunities for forest-related crime, including corruption, is another way to create fiscal space by ensuring that rents from the exploitation of forest-based resources are captured by the state. Stopping large-scale illegal forest conversion through targeted law enforcement serves biodiversity conservation objectives as well.

**Improve the availability of forest-related data.** Better data and information management systems are essential for informed planning, granting and monitoring of permits and other forest management tasks.

**Strengthen institutional capacity.** Competencies in functions such as transparent financial management, inclusive land-use planning and coordination across sectors and levels are necessary for the planning and implementation of most development activities at all levels.

**Improve forest governance.** Improvements in forest governance more generally – including transparency, inclusive decision making processes and mechanisms for accountability – help empower constituencies for the public interest. Such improvements also provide tools to protect the rights and livelihoods of forest communities that may be threatened by external agents of forest conversion.

## 18.6 Concluding thoughts

### 18.6.1 Key features of REDD+ to protect

As the idea of REDD+ continues to evolve rapidly, and its concrete expressions diversify, it is worth pausing to reflect on the key elements that make REDD+ worth pursuing and that could be at risk. First, of course, is the objective that the name describes, reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. The ever-accumulating evidence that the Earth is on a path to potentially catastrophic climate change makes the pursuit of this objective a moral imperative.

Next is the association of REDD+ with transformational change. Achieving REDD+ is not about business as usual in international forestry cooperation:

piecemeal technical interventions ranging from reduced impact logging to improved cooking stoves. Instead, it is about transformational shifts in the political economy of forests, challenging the destruction of forests for the benefit of narrow vested interests at the expense of the broader public interest and forest communities. It is about changing the economics of forests through new incentives to conserve a globally important ecosystem service and it is about changing the politics of forests by recognising new rights and decision making norms.

Accordingly, the features of REDD+ that distinguish it from past efforts to change forest governance and management are critical. One of these is the link to performance: shifting the focus from inputs and outputs to outcomes and results is essential for REDD+ effectiveness and legitimacy. Another is its implementation at the national and jurisdictional scales. No matter how innovative or standards-compliant, not even hundreds of pilot projects are likely to add up to transformational change in the absence of national-level policy and institutional development and improvements in subnational land use planning.

### 18.6.2 The risks of REDD+... and of its loss

At the time the Global Comparative Study on REDD+ was conceived, there was a prevailing assumption that REDD+ was poised to take off quickly. For the advocates of forest communities, a quick start to REDD+ was scary, since it was feared that any programme to make forests more valuable would make forest communities worse off, given the governance conditions characteristic of many forested countries.

For forest communities, a slower start to REDD+ has in some respects been a good thing, in terms of providing more time for their voices to be incorporated into REDD+ policy processes at all levels and more attention to the rights, livelihoods and safeguards issues of particular importance to them. At the same time, the problems anticipated by some would be 'good problems to have', because if they were to arise, at least it would indicate that REDD+ is assuming some reality on the ground, REDD+ funds are flowing and REDD+ policies are starting to challenge vested interests.

If REDD+ were not getting some traction, we would not have to worry about its risks. But a bigger risk would be for REDD+ as a vision to fail to compete with business as usual. The local benefits of maintaining forests are significant: on average, households located in and around forests derive more than one fifth of their income from forest resources, according to findings by CIFOR's Poverty and Environment Network (PEN).<sup>1</sup> It would be ironic, and tragic,

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1 <http://www.cifor.org/pen>

if relatively benign land uses arising from REDD+ (from the perspective of social and environmental impacts) were to lose out to the wholesale conversion of forests – and often, dispossession of communities – associated with commercial-scale agribusiness and mining because REDD+ was seen as too risky.

### **18.6.3 Reasons for optimism**

The litany of problems encountered by the first generation of REDD+ initiatives can make for discouraging reading. But despite adverse changes in the broader context, and hard lessons learned from early experience, the potential of REDD+ continues to capture the imagination and attract continuing investment at all levels due to the facts that: i) there is wide consensus that it will not be possible to keep global warming below the 2°C target without a concerted effort to reduce emissions from land use change; ii) UNFCCC negotiators continue to advance, if slowly, toward agreements on finance, safeguards and RELs/MRV and financial commitments from bilateral and multilateral donors have not yet shown signs of diminishing; iii) national governments and pro-REDD+ constituencies continue to develop REDD+ policies and strategies, in many cases with the explicit support of heads of state; iv) subnational actors (such as those associated with the Governors' Climate and Forests Task Force) have emerged to complement the hundreds of project-level initiatives.

In addition, several positive advances currently and prospectively attributable to REDD+ will be useful, regardless of what happens to REDD+ as a global mechanism, national strategy or collection of local projects. These include greater global awareness of the importance of forests in climate protection, increased transparency of forest-related information and decision making in a number of countries and renewed attention to forest tenure issues. REDD+ as a worthy objective is still very much alive.