**Networking for equity
in forest climate policy**

REDDnet

The role of trust in REDD+

*Trust cannot be sustained without systems
to ensure accountability and redress.*

- Marcus Colchester,
Forest Peoples Programme

As negotiations on the shape of REDD+ continue at national and global levels, REDD-Net's network of civil society organizations has identified the issue of trust as a high priority for further examination. In this issue we explore the importance of trust in REDD+, why the success of REDD+ depends on trust, and how trust may need to come with its own set of warnings.

odi

CATIE
Solutions for environment and development
Soluciones para el ambiente y desarrollo

RECOFTC
THE CENTER FOR
PEOPLE AND FORESTS

Inside this issue

About REDD-Net

REDD-Net is the hub for knowledge sharing and resources on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD+). Aimed at southern civil society organizations and practitioners in REDD, the network offers the latest information and resources to help build pro-poor REDD projects and policies. Led by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), REDD-Net's partners include RECOFTC – The Center for People and Forests, CATIE, and UCSD.

Who needs to trust whom, and why?

For REDD+ to succeed a number of key actors will need to learn to put their trust in others. This graphic illustrates the various relationships that will need to be maintained.

Some definitions and translations of trust

English
Trust: To place confidence in, to hope, to permit something without fear, to rely on the truthfulness of.[1]

Bahasa
Percaya: Similar to the English word, this means to believe, to trust, to be confident in.

Mandarin
信任 **(xin ren):** The first character (xin) means 'rely on' or 'trust in.' The second character (ren) means 'responsibility' or 'task.'

Thai
ไว้ใจ **(wai jai):** The first syllable (wai) means 'to put,' and the second syllable (jai) means 'heart' or 'mind.' So, when you trust someone in Thai, you put your heart/mind in him/her.

Vietnamese
Tin tưởng: The word 'tin' may mean 'trust' (as a noun) or 'news.' The second word means 'thought' (past tense of the verb 'to think').

---

[1] Adapted from Merriam Webster.

Why is trust emerging as such a key issue in REDD+?

Trust is central to the success of most our dealings with other people, and it is certainly a critical factor in the success of all development initiatives. However there are some unique factors in the design of REDD+ that we think make trust a particularly valuable commodity:

- **REDD+ has yet to be formally adopted by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).** As the development of REDD+ and associated groundwork moves forward, developing countries simply have to trust that developed countries will continue to show commitment to this yet-to-be finalized mechanism, and that they will not treat REDD+ as a means to avoid their own commitments to reduce emissions.

- **REDD+ touches upon histories of imbalanced power.** Past grievances between and within countries, regions, communities, and governments often cause negotiations to start from positions of distrust. In particular, those closest to and most dependent on the forests – including indigenous peoples, rural poor, women, and youth – may find it particularly hard to trust that REDD+ will bring a fair share of lasting benefits to them.

- **REDD+ deals with forests.** With the scale of valuable resources at stake, and massive failures in state and industrial forest management over recent decades, a great deal of trust has already been squandered. Valuable natural forest continues to be lost; timber is trafficked with ease; and large sums of money change hands through corruption, violence, and land grabbing. There are risks for REDD+ in being too closely associated with forest enterprises, many of which have failed to bring real and lasting benefits to local communities.

- **Carbon credits are emerging as central to REDD+.** At root, the carbon credit market is a virtual futures market. This is fundamentally different from the type of buying and selling of tangible and physical goods that most of us, including local communities and indigenous peoples, are used to. The vagueness and intangibility of carbon markets encourage suspicion among rural communities, rather than a sense of security or reliability.

- **REDD+ involves money – possibly a lot of it.** Whether REDD+ remains market-based or is fund-based, significant amounts of money will be involved. This increases the need for caution. When the monetary stakes rise, the incentives for manipulation and exploitation increase correspondingly. Even if the large payments fail to materialize, there is a risk that the expectations of many local communities and indigenous peoples will already have been raised too high.

- **There can be a significant delay between agreement to sell and the realization of benefits.** In the case of market-based carbon credit trading, communities must absorb time, labor, and often opportunity costs before (and if) they see any material benefits.

Given the years of oppression, exploitation and alienation from their lands and from their rights, indigenous peoples are suspicious and defensive when it comes to development initiatives. This is now translating into fear of 'REDD aggression.'

**Rukka Sombolinggi,
UNDP Regional Indigenous Peoples Programme,
Thailand**

Ingredients for trust

It would be necessary for there to be international actors involved for local communities to have faith in any such initiatives.

**Aung Tsen,
Shalom Foundation,
Myanmar**

If all of this leads us to conclude that trust is central to REDD+, what then can we do to build trust? Through interactions with civil society groups around the Asia-Pacific region, REDD-Net suggests a list of factors that are necessary to develop trust:

- **Trustworthy individuals:** Facilitators, negotiators, and other key actors must possess and demonstrate qualities of responsibility, respect, honesty, integrity, understanding, and commitment.
- **Sufficient, relevant, and reliable information:** The information provided to stakeholders, and in particular to communities, must be balanced, complete, and presented in ways that can easily be understood.

- **Sufficient time:** Trust, like relationships, cannot be rushed. It takes time to develop naturally. This is especially true in the case of local communities and indigenous groups with alternative (i.e. non-linear or flexible) concepts of time.
- **Good process:** Negotiations and processes related to REDD+ cannot be treated as boxes to be checked. It is necessary to cultivate belief in the sincerity and goodwill of facilitators and actors who can uphold the 'spirit' of trust.
- **Recognition of context and history:** Where trust has been broken in the past, extra sensitivity and caution must be used. Acknowledgement of past problems and even apologies may be necessary for trust to develop.
- **Security of position, rights, and tenure:** Trust may be limited or not possible at all when people feel insecure about their rights and ability to control processes and resources.
- **Access to recourse:** Trust is compromised where people are prevented from appealing or seeking recourse. Communities need to be held accountable to commitments made, but there should also be room to allow them to grow and learn. Closing doors to a way out makes willingness to assume risk more difficult.
- **Transparency of interests:** Related to sufficient information, facilitators or proponents must be open about their aims for the initiative, including their position and what they stand to benefit. No questions should be off limits.

The case of Mindanao, Philippines

A carbon project developer approached a group of indigenous peoples through the National Council on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP). Officials known and trusted by the community invited selected indigenous representatives to a meeting, where the developer convinced them of the value of the project. By the end of the meeting, the carbon investor and the indigenous representatives signed a Memorandum of Understanding. This happened in spite of a moratorium that the NCIP had issued halting carbon credit transactions with indigenous communities until safeguard guidelines were in place.

In addition to the lack of broader consultations (particularly because surrounding communities would be affected), serious questions arose over the fact that the selected 'indigenous representatives' were all individuals who had previously proven themselves to be 'pro-mining.'

Lessons from this case include the influence that trusted individuals, institutions, and authorities may have in determining outcomes; the need for solid, well-considered safeguards at the national level; and the importance of a locally-based system for determining the legitimate representatives of the community. [3]

---

[3]   Marlea Munez et al, CoDe REDD.
For more information, visit www.ntfp.org/coderedd.

A breakdown in trust?

Throughout REDD+ negotiations and implementation, there are several key moments when trust can be built or broken:

- **Preliminary project design:** The development of a concept idea note or Project Idea Note (PIN) should involve meaningful consultations with affected communities. This may serve as the initial entry point in establishing trust. *Failure to involve local actors at this stage may compromise trust in subsequent engagements.*

- **Analysis of the drivers of deforestation and degradation (for assessment of emission reduction potential):** This is an important step in establishing the commitment of local communities' involvement in REDD+ design and should involve thorough discussions with relevant stakeholders. *Missing the opportunity to have open discussions on alternatives to forest-degrading activities and the specific options these might include could lead to a breakdown of trust, and thus to failure of these strategies.*

- **Design of the project-management structure:** This process defines the roles, rights, and responsibilities of the various stakeholders, and it is critical to reach a mutually acceptable and trust-building arrangement. *Failure to clarify management responsibilities in the design document in as much detail as possible, as early as possible, and to ensure that communities have access to independent advisory services will severely damage trust.*

- **Design of the benefit-sharing structures:** In terms of establishing clear understandings and reducing potential for suspicion and distrust, this may be one of the most important steps in the REDD+ project design. *Trust could be damaged if stakeholders cannot agree upon and clearly identify exact mechanisms and fund-distribution arrangements, or if they fail to make information available in locally appropriate media and languages.*

The local authorities are quite weak in the [land demarcation process taking place among indigenous groups] and fuel conflicts rather than constructively contribute to their resolution…. There is potential for this distrust to ignite into full and open conflict.

Khim Prasad Ghale, Federation of Indigenous Nationalities, Nepal

The case of Oddar Meanchey, Cambodia

The first REDD+ project in Cambodia was initiated in Oddar Meanchey by a coalition of organizations including Community Forestry International, Pact Cambodia, and Terra Global Capital. The project was innovative and had strong government support. However, as dynamics have played out, the Oddar Meanchey case illustrates a couple of elements that have led or may lead to misunderstanding, distrust, and conflict.

The first is the significance of preexisting context. Cambodia has suffered a traumatic recent history when the Khmer Rouge victimized vulnerable communities. In particular during the Khmer Rouge era, the idea of 'community,' known as *sahatgaw*, was corrupted to mean something oppressive and contrary to the rights of the individual. As a result, communities in Cambodia became highly suspect of engaging in 'community-based' activities. Given the generally fragile conditions of trust in Cambodia, it is essential that full disclosure of information and consultation occur.

Second, some confusion arose around the benefit-sharing mechanism: As money did not immediately materialize, the community suspected they were being cheated, and the local actors lost trust.

This case underscores the importance the prior context of trust. Where trust is fragile, make deliberate efforts to ensure that all stakeholders fully understand and agree to conditions. Time frames must also be clear, and as far as possible, agreed deadlines met. [2]

In the case of Thailand, trust on the part of the government towards communities is low. Especially in the case of one convention the government was keen to see ratified, civil society organizations used information to derail or halt government-supported activities. In Thailand, the government's trust in the communities needs to be restored.

Kittisak Rattanakrajangsri, Indigenous Peoples' Foundation for Education and Environment, Thailand

---

[2] Personal communication with Kalyan Hou, RECOFTC.

Too much of a good thing?

An analysis by Regan Suzuki, REDD-Net Asia-Pacific Coordinator

In choosing facilitators, what ultimately matters is that they are capable of creating confidence within a diverse make-up of groups. Take the facilitator's ideologies, political affiliation, educational and social background, as well as attitude and mannerisms into consideration before assigning the task to him/her.

Bhola Bhattarai, Federation of Community Forestry Users (FECOFUN), Nepal

A stranger does not have reserves of social capital to draw on. If a person is trusted by the community, regardless of his expertise in the area or even intentions, his viewpoint and suggestions have a high likelihood of being followed.

Nguyen Quang Tan, RECOFTC, Vietnam

REDD-Net received the following inputs from two civil society activists in Cambodia and the Philippines, which point to an interesting question: Where trust is concerned can you have too much of a good thing?

Indigenous peoples still have too much trust. They are easily manipulated, and as long as local and provincial government authorities are involved, I am worried that their rights and land will be violated. – **Hon Navoun, Highlanders Association, Cambodia**

On Panay Island, Philippines, communities were encouraged to plant trees in an area by government officials who were trusted individuals. The communities were not informed that the area would be declared a conservation zone where harvesting would be restricted and no alternatives would be given. They were ultimately harmed by their trust in government officials and have since ended up in greater poverty as a result. – **Marlea Munez, CoDe REDD, Philippines**

Where should community-oriented organizations position themselves in the debate on REDD+ and the building of trust around it? It is not an easy question. Numerous indigenous, community, and other organizations are ringing alarm bells about the possible (and in some cases existing) negative impacts of REDD+. For reasons of the scale, the potentially large amounts of money involved, and the pre-existing power imbalances, many local communities are justifiably worried. While it may be true that trust is important to making REDD+ work, the question they are asking is: Should it work?

However, the message REDD-Net contacts are communicating to us is that in spite of its risks, REDD+ does offer them valuable opportunities. It offers a new way of recognizing the contributions communities make as stewards of natural resources, and it presents a new way of valuing forests – as worth more standing than cut. In some cases, the communities themselves may be more optimistic than representative organizations.

I see our role as trying to come to a balanced understanding of the interests and desires of communities. Of course, there will be no single community voice that accepts or rejects REDD+. But what we can do is collect information and experiences as widely as possible, in as impartial a way as possible, and present this back to communities. In this way, we can support them in making the most informed and best overall decisions for themselves.

FPIC: A tool for building trust?

An example of how seriously trust is being treated in REDD+ is the adoption by UN-REDD of the Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) process. In June 2010 in Vietnam, UN-REDD organized a regional workshop with indigenous group representatives in order to develop a set of practical draft guidelines for achieving Free, Prior, and Informed Consent. The results of the workshop will eventually inform similar processes in Latin America and Africa.

Regardless of whether or not they consent to activities, communities involved in an FPIC process must trust that they are being provided with information that is full and unbiased, by facilitators who are neutral and who actively listen to communities.

What were the results of the ground-breaking meeting? The process raised a number of critical questions and concerns. These centered around how much time to devote to the process (should there even be any time limit?), how to ensure that facilitators are really impartial, and how to assess whether communities really understand what they are consenting (or not consenting) to in the case of UN-REDD. There were concerns that FPIC would be treated as one more hurdle, or one more box to check off on a list, in the inevitable progress from proposal to implementation, regardless of the opinion of the local communities:

It is indispensible that full and balanced information be provided to communities to ensure ongoing trust and goodwill. Even at the risk of complicating discussions and confusing communities, they need to be presented with all sides and relevant information. –
Nguyen Quang Tan, RECOFTC Vietnam, Vietnam

We have sometimes been critical of the developed countries without fully understanding their situations. In some instances, we found out that their representatives have taken our side and backed our stance.

Bhola Bhattarai, Federation of Community Forestry Users (FECOFUN), Nepal

Free Prior and Informed Consent

Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) is both a right and a process. Emerging from the landmark United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2007, it sets the minimum standards for the survival, dignity, and wellbeing of indigenous peoples. While not legally binding, it underscores rights outlined in many international treaties. One of the key articles contained in UNDRIP is reference to the right to free, prior and informed consent for development activities on indigenous lands and territories. As such, FPIC is being adopted by a number of industries operating on indigenous lands as a measure of best practice. REDD+ project proponents have begun to incorporate it within program and project designs.

Trust building:
Some practical ways forward

If trust is central to REDD+ negotiations and activities, then its existence or absence will play a key role in determining the initiative's long-term success. Over the coming months, REDD-Net will be keeping watch on the development, or undermining, of trust through REDD+ strategies. Please send us your comments, thoughts and experiences to add to the ongoing debate. Will all parties in REDD+ be able to walk away as winners? Only time – and trust – will tell.

To conclude, four key lessons on trust-building:

- *Acknowledge where trust has been broken.* If trust has been compromised in the past, this should be acknowledged. This doesn't mean blaming or accusing, but just laying out in the open the fact that trust has been damaged and needs particular attention.

- *Be reliable.* Go out of your way to show that you are sincere and genuinely concerned about the interests of the other party. Take the first step in showing an attitude of trust and openness, even when the other side has not done the same.

- *Be mindful of the day-to-day quality of the relationship.* Pay attention to how communication and interaction are interpreted, whether the other side's expectations are being met and how this affects individual relationships.

- *Be clear about future expectations, processes and outcomes.* It is important in negotiating agreements that details (payment schedules, precise mechanisms, etc.) be spelled out in as much detail as possible.