



## A PARTICIPATORY APPROACH TO DESIGN REDD+ BENEFITS

“There’s nowt so queer as folk” is a well-known saying from northern England which, when translated into standard English, means that there is nothing quite so strange or unpredictable as people. This saying is well worth remembering as countries develop their national REDD+ strategies. Trees are fairly predictable – if you know the species, the characteristics of the site where they are growing, and your planned management interventions, you can fairly accurately anticipate what they will look like in the future. In contrast, you can never be sure what people are going to think or do.

This is well demonstrated in a couple of recent [reports from Viet Nam](#). As part of the continuing work on designing a REDD+ compliant benefit distribution system, UN-REDD undertook consultations with local stakeholders and commissioned the Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV) to design and implement a game-based approach to see how people feel about cash versus non-cash benefits, the timing of benefits, and whether benefits should accrue individually to households, or collectively to communities or other units.

The results are fascinating. It was clear that, even though all villages involved in the game-playing had been involved in earlier awareness raising, the concept of conditionality – that they would only receive benefits if they performed – was not well understood. But also the results were not always what would have been expected. For example:

- Indigenous peoples were more likely to select benefits accruing to individual households rather than to the community as a whole.
- Those people with weaker links to the forest (for example, those not holding contracts for forest protection), and Kinh (ethnic majority) people preferred benefits in the form of cash, but felt that the money should be shared equally among community members.
- Women, especially indigenous women, tended to be more cautious about the timing of benefits because they feared that they would be obliged to repay some of the benefits if there was a fire or other impact on the forest, which would have an impact on carbon-related performance.
- Women also preferred non-cash benefits that were orientated towards investment in improved agricultural techniques, whereas men tended to prefer investments in community infrastructure.

These results in themselves indicate that caution is needed in designing benefit distribution systems. For example, it is often assumed that indigenous peoples are more likely to favour a collective approach, but such was not the case in these results.

The situation is even more complicated when you consider that basic information provided by local government about villagers is sometimes incorrect or misleading. For example, officers from the Peoples’ Committee in one commune advised the team conducting the game-playing exercise that in one particular village the majority of the inhabitants were indigenous people. However, in reality the Kinh people were in the majority, there were some ethnic minority households who had migrated from other parts of the country, and there were no indigenous peoples, in the strictest sense, at all!

Since REDD+ will only work, and will only be sustainable if local people feel that their interests are being met, these results demonstrate that there can be no short-cut to design either REDD+ implementation measures or benefit distribution systems. On the other hand, there obviously need to be limits on the range of options available, or the whole system will become unwieldy. An intensive process of local consultation is going to be necessary to find an appropriate balance, and this will likely be one of the most complex and costly elements of the REDD+ system. Consequently, it is better to start early in working out how these local consultations will be undertaken effectively and efficiently, and that the information on which they are based is correct.

Go-REDD+ is an e-mail listserv managed by the UN-REDD Programme team in Asia-Pacific, based in Bangkok. The main objective of Go-REDD+ is to distribute information, synopses of research results and activities related to REDD+ in Asia-Pacific, to assist countries in their REDD+ readiness efforts. Old messages will be archived on the [Regional Activities pages](#) of the UN-REDD Programme web-site. Discussion forum on Go-REDD+ is available through UN-REDD Programme's online knowledge sharing platform, [www.unredd.net](http://www.unredd.net). Please note that you must be a member to join the Discussion Forum. To request membership, please contact [admin@unredd.net](mailto:admin@unredd.net) with your name and affiliation. The Go-REDD+ team welcomes feedback, suggestions or inquiries to [goredd.th@undp.org](mailto:goredd.th@undp.org).