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GO-REDD+

PES AND EQUITY: LESSONS FOR REDD+

Equity could hardly be more topical in the current global financial and political climate. Exemplified by the Occupy Movement, the contrast between the 1% and the 99% illustrates the widespread perception that persistent inequity is a crucial element in the failure of financial markets. But does inequity extend to the market for environmental services? Do Payment for Environmental Services (PES) schemes put money in the pockets, and power in the hands, of the few at the expense of the many? How can we objectively define and measure the impacts of PES schemes on local equity? And what does this imply for REDD+?

A group of researchers has been investigating these questions through the UK government-financed project "Safeguarding local equity as the global values of ecosystem services rise"[1]. Dr. Kate Schreckenberg of Southampton University, and her co-researchers, developed a framework for assessing the impacts of PES on equity at the local level, and set out to test the framework through case studies of existing schemes in Bolivia, Cambodia, India and Uganda. The framework examines three different categories of equity: distributional equity, relating to the sharing of benefits; procedural equity, dealing with representation and voice in decision-making and other processes; and contextual equity, or the frame conditions which determine whether stakeholders have the power to realize their goals.

Equity is a key element of all proposed frameworks to assess the impacts of REDD+ programmes, including the Social and Environmental Principles and Criteria (SEPC) developed under the UN-REDD Programme, and the REDD+ Social and Environmental Standards (SES) drawn up by a consortium of southern civil society organisations. Efforts to assist in the objective assessment of equity should therefore prove highly relevant as indicators and monitoring tools under the systems being developed. The framework proposed under this project distinguishes equity from concepts such as justice, fairness and equality, and addresses how the parameters for equity are set, by whom, and for what specific objectives.

Going beyond the distribution of benefits alone, this broader assessment of equity will help in assessing whether inequity is somehow inherent to some forms of PES and what, if anything, REDD+ programmes can do to address this. For example, Afforestation / Reforestation (A/R) projects under both the CDM and voluntary schemes which use private landholdings, however small, as the basis for participation and benefits, inherently exclude the most disadvantaged groups. REDD+ will also face the same limitation, as long as benefit distribution is based on payments for outputs, in terms of carbon stock change per unit area.

The project has produced a series of background papers summarizing the issues relating to equity in various categories of PES, including equity in REDD+, and conclusions from the case studies will be posted on the REDD-net website in coming weeks. As a recent commentary by Dr. Promode Kant of India's Institute of Green Economy notes, REDD+, like any scheme based on inducements, should not be overloaded with expectations to redress persistent social inequities. But it can, at least, shine a light on the policies, processes and regulations affecting forest tenure, management and use, that continue to distort equity of opportunity and of outcome.

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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. Please note that you must be a member to join the Discussion Forum. To request membership, please contact admin@unredd.net with your name and affiliation. The **Go-REDD+** team welcomes feedback, suggestions or inquiries to goredd.th@undp.org.