



CONVEYING REDD+ AT THE LOCAL LEVEL: SOME STEPS IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

We all know the feeling of suffering from information overload. Yet, answers that we find or are offered often deal with questions that we have not asked. Sounds familiar, doesn't it?

This problem is particularly evident when it comes to REDD+. The problem is compounded by the fact that different audiences require quite different information or messages, as they ask different questions, if they ask any questions at all. Foresters, decision makers and people at the local level undoubtedly have diverse needs, distinct abilities to translate information into useful meaning and different roles in REDD+.

Indigenous peoples and forest-dependent communities are key to making REDD+ a successful mechanism, although they are not alone in this. Considerable efforts are therefore required to raise their awareness on REDD+. REDD+ is an effort to create a financial value for the carbon stored in forests, offering incentives for developing countries to reduce emissions from forested lands and invest in low-carbon paths to sustainable development. Simple, isn't it? Unfortunately this means very little, if anything, to people living in and around forests. So what should they learn and know.

RECOFTC – The Center for People and Forests has pursued this issue and reduced the large number of questions to nine key questions, which “are frequently asked by grassroots communities”. For each question an answer was then prepared to help local-level facilitators perform their job better and deliver consistent messages. The nine questions are:

1. What is climate change?
2. What causes climate change?
3. What is the role of forests in climate change?
4. What is the impact of climate change on local communities and vice versa?
5. What is REDD+?
6. What is forest carbon trading?
7. What are the issues in REDD+?
8. What could REDD+ mean for local communities?
9. What is the role of RECOFTC in REDD+?

Providing answers to each question is a laudable effort, especially because the guidance has been produced in five languages, i.e. besides English, Bahasa Indonesia, Lao, Nepali and Vietnamese.

It is difficult to judge what local people definitely need to know. For example, many probably have never heard about California and its future carbon market. Many will probably find it puzzling that you can sell something that you can neither see nor touch. In answering question number 7, more questions are posed than answers are provided. Perhaps most important, references to monetary benefits, even if they are described as potential only, should probably be treated with greatest care, as it is frequently followed up with questions number 10 and 11, “What do I have to do to get some money?” and “When will I get it?” This has raised high expectations, which might be detrimental over the coming years, when it will become apparent that from getting ready for REDD+ to receiving performance-based payments will take much longer than many people expect.

The mild criticism aside, RECOFTC has taken steps in the right direction and much will depend on the facilitators in making good use of the guidance. It is available at <http://www.recoftc.org/site/resources/Climate-Change-Forests-and-You.php>.

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.