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Equity and ecosystem co-benefits in REDD+: lessons from the social co-benefits debate

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Presentation to 'Identifying and promoting ecosystem co-benefits
from REDD+' workshop, UN-REDD Programme, Murray
Edwards College, Cambridge, 27th April 2010

Overview

- What are the equity issues that arise in relation to social co-benefits (SCB) and REDD+ revenue distribution?
- What are the equity issues that might arise in relation to ecosystem co-benefits (ECB)?
 - What can we learn from social co-benefits issues?
 - Are these equity issues for ECB a sub-set of the broader equity issues surrounding REDD+?

What are social co-benefits in REDD+?

- No formal definition but in establishing approaches, need to be aware of:
 - Different framing of ‘benefits’ (e.g. livelihoods framework; rights based approaches etc.)
 - Benefits *and* costs
 - Whether seeking ‘benefits’ or ‘no harm’
 - Barriers vs. risks
 - Equity itself as a social co-benefit
 - Ethics?
- In REDD+, normally refer to:
 - Financial co-benefits (C payments; employment; timber/NTFP sales)
 - Non-financial co-benefits (enhanced resource rights; infrastructure improvements; enhanced voice and choice)

Equity issues surrounding social co-benefits

International

Temporal

Issues:

- Benefit/cost distribution along REDD+ 'value chain'

Mediating factors, e.g:

- Definitions of rights to land, NR and carbon
- Decision making authority over rights to benefits
- Aligning global and local perspectives on benefit types

Vertical

Issues:

- Duration of benefits/costs
- ## Mediating factors, e.g:
- Contract lengths and flexibility
 - Sustainability of 'alternative' activities
 - MRV systems

Issues:

- Benefit distribution between actors
- ## Mediating factors, e.g:
- Individual vs. community vs. 'offsite' targeting
 - Local power relations
 - Reference levels
 - Eligible activities
 - Forest types

Local

Horizontal

'off-site'; community; Individual; community; 'off-site'

Lessons from early REDD+ activities and broader forestry/development policy

- **Trade-offs are common:**
 - Cost efficiency of systems to enhance equity (e.g. certification)
 - Contradictions between social and commercial aims
 - Political feasibility (e.g. international guidelines)
- **Implementation, rather than design, is the main challenge:**
 - Politics is often missing: incentives changing or reinforcing power relationships
 - Effectiveness of instruments and poor implementation of them (e.g. safeguards; guidelines; standards)
 - Political commitment and weak institutions (particularly around social and environmental issues)
- **Equity issue is often narrowly framed:**
 - Assumptions around participatory approaches
 - Focus on particular groups / little disaggregation within groups
 - Wider drivers of (in)equity often not taken into account (e.g. policy coordination and government fatigue)
 - Focus on revenue distribution
- **Reliable evidence is patchy for many REDD+ type policies**
 - On impacts of policies (e.g. on poverty)
 - Data on social co-benefits linked to ecosystem co-benefits

What are the equity issues surrounding ecosystem co-benefits?

- **Similar to those for social co-benefits:**
 - Ecosystem co-benefits normally captured in questions of equity surrounding ‘natural capital’ (e.g. in livelihoods framework)
- **But two differences(?)**
 - Narrower set of links between ecosystems and benefits for local communities
 - Potential conflicts between REDD+ approaches that aim to promote ecosystem co-benefits and those that aim to promote social co-benefits?

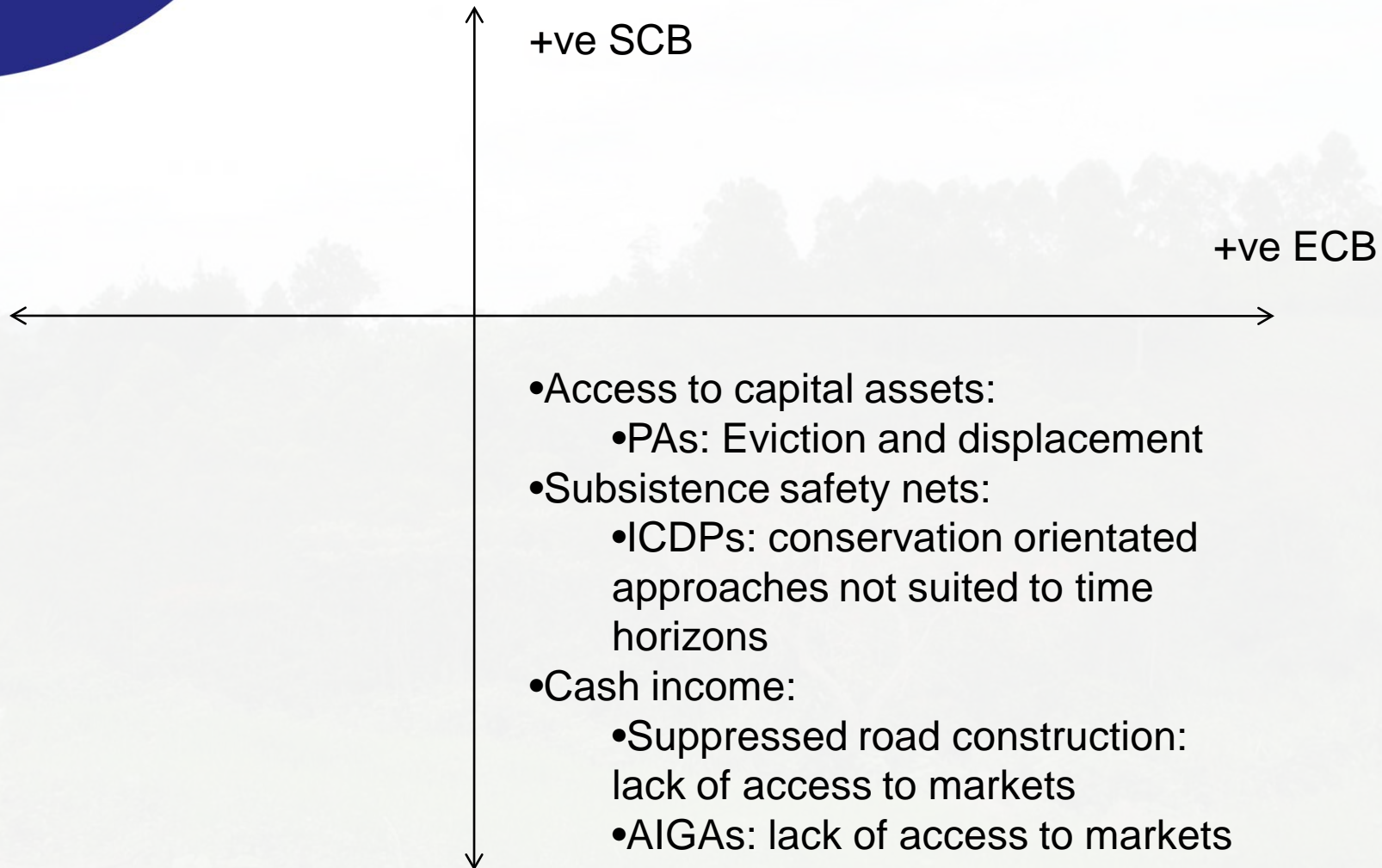
Links between ecosystem co-benefits and livelihoods

- (Scherr et al. 2003):
 - **Capital assets:** flexible, multi-output assets that can be converted into financial, physical, human and more valuable natural capital
 - **Subsistence safety nets:** forest foods to meet dietary shortfalls; fodder; construction materials; fuel; medicine
 - **Sources of employment:** Forestry; wood industries; etc.
 - **Cash income:** NTFP sales; timber
- The question of equity is then one of how REDD+ mediates these links:
 - Access to above (influenced by REDD+ design; context; power and politics etc.)
- But there are fewer links (e.g. improvements in governance may fit under broader social co-benefits)



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Are there tensions between ECB and SCB?



Summary points

- Definitions of SCB matter for understanding equity
- Large range of equity issues around SCB of REDD+, and many lessons
- Equity issues around ECB are a sub-set of equity issues for REDD+ more generally
- New issues may arise where trying to align SCB and ECB agendas



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Many thanks!

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