



## DO REDD+ PROJECTS DELIVER BENEFITS TO LOCAL PEOPLE?

How many times have you been asked what local people can expect from REDD+? How many times did you then have to provide a rather vague answer? This can be embarrassing or it is at least unsatisfactory at a time when expectations about the magnitude of REDD+ benefits are rising faster than the atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide, which exceeded, for the first time, 400 parts per million recently.

Information on benefits (as well as risks) that REDD+ might bring remains scant. [A recent article](#) is trying to fill the knowledge gap through a review of initial outcomes and early lessons of 41 REDD+ related projects in Africa, Asia and the Pacific and South and Central America.

In terms of opportunity benefits, which the authors define as jobs, payments, education and infrastructure, projects make only a modest contribution. The ways the benefits are provided also don't appear much different from any integrated conservation and development project.

Considering only material opportunities is a rather narrow perspective. The authors have therefore also looked at security and empowerment, important parameters in terms of assessing human well-being. Contrary to early fears that REDD+ will induce land grabs and evictions, these projects are instead doing more to enhance local populations' land claims and strengthen their rights. Yet, there have been a small number of resettlement cases and in seven projects restrictions on local use of forest resources have been introduced to move towards sustainable land use.

The discussion on empowerment focuses on FPIC, which is particularly crucial in those seven instances where restrictions have been imposed on some, though not necessarily all, land users. In general, findings are very positive. In 39 out of the 41 projects, local people have been consulted and are participating in project implementation in one way or the other, although documented evidence is not sufficiently detailed.

The study results do not provide the evidence that REDD+ increases risks to local populations. At the same time, it also cannot provide evidence that REDD+ can deliver "Win-Wins" for poverty and the environment. While there is huge variation among projects (e.g. regarding size, population numbers and forest type). Projects appear to generally contribute to human well-being. However, there are some shortcomings in the interactions between project staff and communities. Other studies confirm that uncertainty about the forest carbon market and REDD+ policy is causing project developers to delay community consultations and information sharing regarding project plans. The motivation for this delay is often to avoid raising expectations about potential carbon payments and other benefits. How to solve this problem should keep us busy for a while.

The authors cannot provide a definite and authoritative answer to the question of what local people can expect. But the conceptual framework used for the research should open our minds to moving beyond material benefits. The framework and initial trends reported by the authors can be used to build hypotheses for future REDD+ impact evaluations, which no doubt we can expect, and contribute to evolving theories of incentive-based environmental policy.

**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 website. [Discussion forum](#) on **Go-REDD+** is available through UN-REDD Programme's online [knowledge sharing platform](#). The **Go-REDD+** team welcomes feedback, suggestions or inquiries to [goredd.th@undp.org](mailto:goredd.th@undp.org).