



REDD+ AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY, REVISITED

The previous Go-REDD+ issue may have led some readers to conclude that community forestry practice is of limited relevance for REDD+ strategies. This was certainly not our intention. In the interests of balance, we hereby examine two recent papers which put a more positive slant on the links between community forestry and REDD+.

[Ben Hodgdon and colleagues](#) examine community forest concessions in the Mayan Biosphere Reserve (MBR) in Guatemala, and the potential for using these concessions as the basis for REDD+ activities. Likewise, [Derrick Rosenbach](#) examines how REDD+ in Nepal could be implemented through tried and tested community forestry approaches in the country.

Given that deforestation rates in community-managed areas of the MBR over the last ten years are over twenty times lower than rates in adjacent protected areas, Hodgdon asserts that future REDD+ strategies should draw on community-based forest enterprises rather than non-interventionist conservation approaches. However, although such enterprises create employment and alternative livelihood opportunities for forest-dependent communities, the viability of community forestry is still threatened by the high comparative short-term benefits of conversion of forest to cattle ranching.

The crucial factor in the success of community forestry in the MBR is the freedom of the managers to operate legitimate, lucrative business ventures, part of the profits from which are channeled back into social development projects in the community. As well as being more effective at conserving forest ecosystems than the strict protectionist model, community forest enterprises also substantially reduce the additional incentives that would be required under a REDD+ mechanism to prevent conversion to rangeland.

Rosenbach focuses less on the practical management strategies employed by community forest users' groups (CFUGs) in Nepal, and more on the institutional capacity of CFUGs and their national associations. He asserts that the local governance structures and strong civil society, developed partly as a result of the successful national community forestry programme, may give Nepal a base upon which to build the institutional network required to pool information and to distribute incentives. However, the analysis is based on interviews with a broad cross section of national stakeholders, many of whom appear to view REDD+ as a vehicle for distributing payments rather than as a means to incentivize changes in forest and land management (without which there will be no 'payments', or other forms of positive incentive, to distribute – as outlined in the last Go-REDD+ message).

These two studies offer encouraging, but contrasting, visions of how community forestry may serve as a model on which to develop policies and measures under future national REDD+ mechanisms. Hodgdon accurately highlights the essential role of community-based enterprise but Rosenbach's study underlines the enormous task ahead in addressing pervasive misconceptions about the nature of REDD+.

As contributors to Go-REDD+, we aim to stimulate debate by commenting on some of the latest papers and publications related to REDD+. The conclusions we draw, and the questions we pose, are intended to facilitate critical examination of these papers.

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.