



LESSONS FROM REDD+ FROM HOW TO BECOME A FOREST-ADDING COUNTRY

Ever wonder how a country can turn the corner and increase its forest area? Many of you will have done so and have identified numerous impediments to attracting investments to sustainable forest management. Recent studies on the role of incentives in support of sustainable forest management have highlighted the importance of an enabling environment for forest-losing countries (FLC) to become forest-adding countries (FAC). Most of us are not quite sure what is actually meant by “enabling environment”. So let’s look at five countries (Chile, China, India, the Republic of Korea and Viet Nam), and explore why they have managed to add millions of hectares to their forest estates in recent decades, to learn what and what not to do under a REDD+ mechanism. This is what Hans Gregersen and his three co-authors have done in *The Greener Side of REDD+: Lessons for REDD+ from Countries where Forest Area is Increasing*.

The four analysts identify three principle changes – perhaps also viewed as prerequisites – associated with forest transition. The first one is fairly rapid economic growth, although, as we know, if the primary sector is the predominant engine of growth, we can expect more instead of less deforestation and forest degradation. The second one is major forest environment problems and/or serious wood shortages, which unfortunately are frequently a belated trigger of any significant policy reforms – remember the imposition of logging bans in China, the Philippines and Thailand after massive floods. The third one is a change in attitudes, where forests are not viewed as an obstacle to economic development, but as an integral part of sustainable development. This usually happens when government leaders are convinced – beyond just paying lip service – of the value of the multiple benefits that forests provide.

Major policy reforms have included strengthening the role and rights of indigenous peoples and local communities in forest management and major tenure reforms. There was also a move towards opening up to the global forest products markets and liberalization of wood import policies, followed by rapid growth of wood imports. In addition, significant funds were channeled towards aggressive and major programs of afforestation, reforestation and restoration of degraded lands. As a result countries have graduated as FACs, with the caveat that around 75 percent of the increase in forest area is made up of planted forests.

Besides the obvious positive effects of these shifts – the five countries added almost 60 million hectares in total to their forest estates between 1990 and 2010 – some undesirable side effects can be noted. Major tenure reforms did not necessarily benefit poor rural people, as they were accompanied by sometimes excessive regulatory procedures and cumbersome bureaucratic processes, as well as arbitrary policy changes that left smallholders often in limbo. The shift from domestic to imported raw materials meant that forest degradation, and frequently illegal logging, were exported which, from a REDD+ perspective, means that we are dealing with international leakage. Definitely not good for reducing greenhouse gas emissions! And some of the major programs resulted in the displacement of people and negative impacts on biodiversity.

The authors are very much aware of the pitfalls that can also happen during the implementation of REDD+. They have therefore concluded the analysis with a number of recommendations to ensure that we end up on the *Greener Side of REDD+*.

The full report and a policy brief (also available in Bahasa Indonesia) are available at: http://www.rightsandresources.org/publication_details.php?publicationID=2431

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