



REDD+: TAKING GENDER SERIOUSLY?

As countless development practitioners will tell you, setting the right time for a village meeting is littered with pitfalls. During the day, most villagers are absent as they have to tend to a variety of chores, including cultivating crops or collecting non-timber forest products. Choosing late afternoons, when people return to their homes, appears to be a good option. However, many women cannot attend meetings at this time, when they are usually busy with domestic duties. Their failure to attend continues to be understood (or rather misunderstood) as their lack of interest. Moreover, their absence may not even be noticed, as they are perceived to know nothing, at least nothing of importance.

These misunderstandings, and many others, lead to ill-conceived, gender-blind and gender-biased development interventions. Although the number of initiatives that acknowledge the importance of stakeholder engagement has grown over time, the constraints on women's participation are still poorly understood and their needs are not adequately considered in discussions, planning, negotiations and decision-making. As a result, few people know how to ensure that women can influence the design and monitoring of projects (including REDD+ projects and programs). The impact of projects on gender inequality is therefore usually negligible at best; and detrimental at worst.

Rural women, on average, work longer hours than men and continue to combine economic, social and reproductive roles; they are less literate and less mobile, thus limiting their ability to grasp new livelihood opportunities. If employed, women earn lower salaries and are confined to jobs of lower status. Women have unequal access to land and resources, which limits their ability to access formal credit facilities. Often, women can only access land through marriage and depend on a man (husband, brother or father) for decisions regarding their own well-being, and that of their families. Women are generally more involved in the collection of non-timber forest products (NTFPs), but are less likely to be involved in forest-related enterprise. They are also absent from most formal and informal governance systems related to the management of forests and other natural resources.

Institutions responsible for REDD+ projects and programs do not exist in a vacuum. They are influenced by, and dependent on, the norms, values and attitudes of the society in which they are situated. However, an institution's culture can go some way to avoid the negative impacts of these norms. In *Re-envisioning REDD+: Gender, Forest Governance and REDD+ in Asia*, Jeannette Gurung and Abidah Billah Setyowati prescribe several recommendations that can be adopted to integrate gender perspectives in REDD+ programs, to help ensure that the initiatives do not harm women and that they contribute to gender equality:

1. REDD+ programs should incorporate gender mainstreaming tools.
2. REDD+ projects should incorporate gender into aspects of participation, capacity building, governance and benefit sharing.
3. Provide secure tenure for women.
4. Compensate women for their engagement in forest management.
5. Explore pilot projects that use REDD+ payments to reward women for their knowledge and roles as forest managers.
6. Develop and analyze innovations through pilot projects to use forest carbon markets for income generation for rural women.
7. Look for ways to increase women's engagement and buy-in by increasing their living standards and well-being.
8. Promote renewable energy and agroforestry techniques to address fuel wood and fodder requirements and to build women's resilience to climate change.

There are plenty more publications on [women in forest management available from the Rights and Resources Initiative \(RRI\)](#). So if you're ever tempted to use it, be warned that "There's no information about gender issues in REDD+" is no longer a valid excuse!

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, 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.