



ASSESSING THE POTENTIAL OF LINKING REDD+ WITH POVERTY REDUCTION

The primary aim of REDD+ is clearly climate change mitigation. However, it was recognized in 2007 in the Bali Action Plan that REDD+ should reach beyond mitigation and deliver environmental and social 'co-benefits', including contributing to poverty reduction. But how realistic is it to kill two birds with one stone or what is the green opportunity for poverty reduction?

[Cornelia Hett and her co-authors](#) have recently attempted to answer this question for Lao PDR. They applied a spatial analysis and overlaid poverty rates, absolute number of poor people and carbon stock densities for the entire country.

In general, where natural forests exist and thus the highest carbon stocks dominate the landscape, the incidence of poverty often peaks. Remote forest areas, particularly in mountainous regions (of which Lao PDR is a good example), are often characterized by low market access, poor infrastructure, and scarcity of options for agricultural production. They have thus been called poverty traps. The poverty rate in shifting cultivation areas in northern Lao PDR is considerably higher than the national average. For this reason, the Government of Lao PDR has especially targeted shifting cultivation areas in the northern uplands for REDD+.

Unfortunately, most poor people live outside such primary target areas for REDD+. The villages that are most interesting for carbon conservation, and thus REDD+ target areas, have carbon values of 60–100 tC/ha and more than 100 tC/ha. These two categories, however, have low shares of the total Lao population living below the poverty line, 13.8 percent and 4.8 percent, respectively. In other words, most people living below the poverty line (58 percent) in Lao PDR do not live in a carbon-rich environment. For them, REDD+ is not the instrument to lift them out of poverty.

The analysis by the research team clearly indicates that there are limitations to linking REDD+ and poverty reduction, at least in Lao PDR. In addition, and probably more important is that such an analysis is undertaken to inform planning of REDD+ activities, or there may be some rude awaking. Combined with environmental parameters it can provide additional information on where REDD+ might go hand in hand with biodiversity conservation and the maintenance or enhancement of important ecosystem services. Finally, even if REDD+ cannot make a major dent in poverty rates in Lao PDR, the very poor would surely welcome benefits, in whatever form, for taking better care of "their" forests.

Invitation

Go-REDD+ welcomes your contribution to the debate on the potential of linking REDD+ with poverty reduction. We invite you to share your comments in the [Go-REDD+'s discussion forum](#).

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.