

A No REDD protest, Mexico.

climate &
deforestation

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The great REDD gamble

Time to ditch risky REDD for community-based approaches that are effective, ethical and equitable

october 2014 | report



**Friends of
the Earth
International**



Oil palm fruit.

The great REDD gamble

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Executive summary

Now that various REDD readiness and REDD projects have been underway for some time, we can see that—as already predicted by Friends of the Earth International and other movements and organisations in civil society—REDD is a risky and false solution to climate change, both in theory and in practice.

There are now some notable real world examples demonstrating that REDD projects can facilitate rather than prevent the continued use of fossil fuels; exacerbate tensions over land and resource rights; have significant negative impacts on forest-dependent Indigenous Peoples and local communities; threaten food security; and even endanger forests. Some REDD projects have also faced significant financial difficulties, wasting considerable amounts of public funding.

In this brief report we look at three specific case studies, but there are already numerous examples of ‘REDD going wrong’. We eventually selected the N’hambita Pilot Project in Mozambique, the Kalimantan Forests and Climate Partnership (KFCP) in Indonesia, and the implementation of REDD+ in Peru, as three case studies that demonstrate a range of issues and problems relating to REDD.

The N’hambita project in Mozambique—quoted as a model project by the UN, and partly funded by the EU—is a clear example of a forest carbon/REDD project that has failed to deliver on most of its social, economic and environmental objectives. It has experienced severe methodological difficulties, including with respect to lack of baselines and poor accounting. Most of the farmers that have been contracted to grow trees do not understand that they (and their descendants should they die) have signed up to a 100-year obligation to look after the trees,

even though payments will cease after just seven years. Indeed, when questioned many of them stated they may cut down all but their fruit trees after the seven years, and some even think that the timber is one of the intended benefits of the project. Families have also found it increasingly difficult to secure enough food because of the time spent tending saplings. On top of all this, the project has been a financial disaster, with expected income from carbon markets not even covering the operating costs of the project. The fact that this failed project was also awarded ‘triple gold status’ by the Climate Community and Biodiversity Alliance (CCBA)—on the basis of a flawed assessment—also highlights how misleading such certification processes can be.

The KFCP, another high profile demonstration REDD+ project, also failed to meet most of its objectives and has been quietly shelved by its funder, the Australian government. Even though KFCP was set up to demonstrate how to share the benefits of REDD projects with local communities, it was constantly accused of failing to consult and engage communities and of ignoring local Dayak knowledge about peatland rehabilitation and fire management. KFCP also exacerbated existing conflicts about land tenure, and there were numerous methodological and technical problems. Deforestation and the spread of oil palm plantations in the broader area continue unabated. The Australian government has yet to explain the specific reasons why it decided to curtail most of the planned activities so abruptly.

The implementation of REDD+ in Peru shows how REDD can be used to distract attention from genuine solutions to climate change and to ‘greenwash’ company credentials. It also shows how REDD can be manipulated to further economic growth objectives.

One common factor that emerges very strongly from these case studies is the extraordinarily disruptive influence that REDD+ projects can have on Indigenous Peoples and local communities, especially if people have not consented to the project in question or been engaged in its design, or if there are existing uncertainties about land tenure. We also found that REDD+ projects can trample over existing local knowledge, and interfere with local food security.

REDD can also impact marginalised communities in industrialised countries. For example, by increasing the quantity of offsets available to industry the ongoing development of links between California’s cap-and-trade programme and REDD projects in Chiapas, Mexico and Acre, Brazil, is likely to make it easier for California’s industry to continue polluting. A clear example of this is Chevron’s polluting refinery in Richmond, California, which Chevron is expanding so that it can process heavy crude oil from fracking and tar sands. Chevron claims there will be no ‘net increase’ in polluting emissions, but has conceded that extra emissions would be offset through California’s carbon cap-and-trade system.



Women protesting against Chevron, California.

Furthermore, REDD is not a suitable source of financing for mechanisms to prevent deforestation and mitigate climate change, particularly because it is risky and unsustainable. Bringing volatile carbon markets into the equation by linking them to REDD is even more of a gamble—if the price at which carbon is traded plummets, vital project financing can vanish virtually overnight.

The question then becomes: what is the alternative? The answer to that question is community forest management, based on customary traditional knowledge and led by communities. There is now a growing body of evidence showing that supporting and strengthening communities' ability to manage forests is a feasible and cost-effective approach to reducing deforestation which is more effective than the 'protected areas' approach, and also complies with numerous instruments, tools and human rights policies (such as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples).

A key first step in this direction is resolving outstanding land tenure issues. As we see in Costa Rica, community forest management processes already in place would be greatly improved by clarity about communities' tenure with respect to their community forests.

In addition the need to address the real underlying 'drivers' of deforestation needs to be translated into real efforts to reduce excessive levels of consumption of food, timber and metals by wealthy countries and elites (since all contribute significantly to deforestation); and a focus on reducing greenhouse gas emissions domestically in industrialised countries.

This alternative approach has already been proposed to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) by the Bolivian government on the basis of the conclusions of the 2010 World People's Conference on Climate Change and Rights of Mother Earth. The seeds of change have already been sown. Now it is time to ditch risky REDD for known community approaches that are effective, ethical and equitable.



Community forest rangers, El Salvador.

Introduction

The great REDD gamble

Time to ditch risky REDD for community-based approaches that are effective, ethical and equitable

Government negotiators involved in the UN's climate change negotiations are gambling with our collective future, choosing risky 'innovative financial mechanisms' such as REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation) that involve the further commodification and financialisation of nature, instead of tried and tested approaches that already exist.

This high-risk strategy is being pursued to promote corporate interests, with a view to leveraging private finance, reducing the cost to the public purse, and maintaining short-term economic growth. This approach is perilous and short-sighted; addressing climate change cannot take second place to these other concerns.

Crucially, it is an approach that is not working. In spite of the global community's efforts to address climate change over the last twenty years, global greenhouse gas emissions are still increasing.¹ A key issue is that the current economic dynamic based on excessive consumption of the world's resources has gone unchallenged: greenhouse gases are still growing in the energy use, industry, transport and buildings sectors.^{2,3} Current 'solutions' to climate change propel this economic dynamic forward rather than challenging it, with nature being converted into yet more products that can be bought and sold. This has been characterised as a new form of enclosure of the commons.⁴

This vogue for 'innovative financial mechanisms' includes carbon markets, which have been championed by governments such as those in the EU as a cost-effective means of dealing with climate change. But carbon markets facilitate continued over-consumption in the global North as well as being unreliable and subject to fraud.⁵ The EU's Emissions Trading Scheme is an illuminating example of just how complex, chaotic and ineffective this approach can be.⁶

REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation) is a similar mechanism with similar flaws. Developed within the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) it is based on the superficially attractive idea that the owners of tropical forests should be paid compensation for maintaining their forests rather than cutting them down (since deforestation and the subsequent decomposition of timber and its products are responsible for significant quantities of the greenhouse gases that cause climate change).⁷ In reality however, REDD is riddled with problems, both in theory and in practice.

FoEI member groups, especially those based in the global South, have been working closely with allies and communities affected by and resisting REDD projects on their land. Through this work and the knowledge gained, we recognise that REDD really is capable of creating more problems than solutions.

The most egregious of these is that by increasing the value of standing forests, REDD is exacerbating existing tensions around land tenure and access to resources. It can also impede ongoing efforts to resolve land tenure disputes,⁸ as REDD presents governments with an increasing financial incentive for the state to retain or assert ownership. The complexity and technicalities of REDD are also distracting attention away from critical debates about land tenure that were already underway in countries like Costa Rica. This is critical for the one billion people, including 60 million Indigenous People, who are dependent on forests for their livelihoods, food and medicine. These sorts of impacts have already been seen with global efforts to delineate protected areas in order to conserve biodiversity. An IUCN review of the Convention on Biological Diversity's Programme of Work on Protected Areas found that the way in which Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' rights were dealt with was very variable, and that there were many examples of bad or inequitable practice. It also found that protected areas are sometimes used as a pawn in broader dialogues about land claims and restitution as well.⁹

At the other end of the spectrum, REDD may work more effectively for wealthier stakeholders, who have clear land tenure or concessions and are directly responsible for deforestation, such as logging companies. Indeed, the current version of REDD, REDD+,¹⁰ has been designed with these stakeholders in mind. These REDD participants are also likely to have better management, participation and negotiating capacity, putting them in an extremely advantageous position when it comes to complex REDD negotiations and operations. A study examining the long-standing Costa Rican Payment for Environmental Services scheme, which works in a similar way to REDD, found that payments tend to go to relatively large farms and private companies.¹¹

A third fundamental flaw is that REDD can lead to cultural upheaval even in those projects that are developed in collaboration with Indigenous Peoples and local communities and designed to provide them with some compensatory income. The constraints imposed by such projects can cause communities to lose their links to and knowledge about the forests, and become more reliant on acquiring money to buy in the goods and

services that the forest previously provided them with. This also means that conservation becomes conditional on communities receiving payment for what they used to do by conviction. A practical consequence of this 'REDD mentality' is that if funding is subsequently withdrawn forest owners may then decide that if they are not being paid to preserve the trees they should harvest them and make money that way. We have seen incidences of this in communities in Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico and Brazil,¹² and it is evident in the N'hambita case study too.

A further problem is that REDD treats forests as nothing more than 'carbon stocks', a commodity to be traded on stock exchanges and markets. According to this logic the 'best' forest will be the one that stores the most carbon, regardless of their biodiversity. Yet forests are some of the most diverse ecosystems on the planet, where local communities and Indigenous Peoples have played an important role in shaping landscapes, and conserving and improving biodiversity. REDD has not been designed with this in mind.

It is important to remember that REDD projects are likely to be problematic whether they are funded through carbon markets and private investment or by governments. Publicly funded projects may suffer all or many of the flaws identified in this report. They can also be used to promote national level carbon markets, offsets, the commodification of forests, and forestry and agriculture, and will not necessarily adhere to the rights of or benefit local communities and Indigenous Peoples.



Pollution can continue in industrialised countries if offset against forest carbon and other projects.

BOX 1: The evolution of REDD¹³

REDD was included in the climate change agenda in 2007 at the UNFCCC COP 13 held in Bali.¹⁴ In the intervening years, REDD processes have advanced in the UNFCCC negotiations and through the establishment of international mechanisms (such as Norway's support for Brazil's Amazon Fund¹⁵) and other processes (such as the Governors' Climate and Forests Task Force¹⁶).

Additional developments include 'blue carbon' projects, which are based on applying a REDD-style approach to coastal ecosystems including mangrove forests.¹⁷ There is also a trend towards discussing 'landscape REDD,' bringing forests and agriculture together under the REDD banner.¹⁸ Similarly the UNFCCC's relatively new Green Climate Fund seeks to support national level approaches and 'low emissions and climate resilient development'.¹⁹ But broadening the scope of such a fundamentally flawed mechanism increases its potential to negatively impact people and their environment.

Unfortunately, REDD 'safeguards' discussed and approved in Cancun in 2010 are likely to have little impact, because they are weak and non-binding.²⁰ Current debate about safeguards within the World Bank (which has been heavily involved in rolling REDD out via its Forest Carbon Partnership Facility) is also extremely worrying, as it seems to be backtracking on its own previously agreed safeguards. For example, a 2104 consultation draft included a provision that would allow governments to 'opt out' of safeguards designed to protect Indigenous Peoples from the impacts of the Bank's lending.²¹

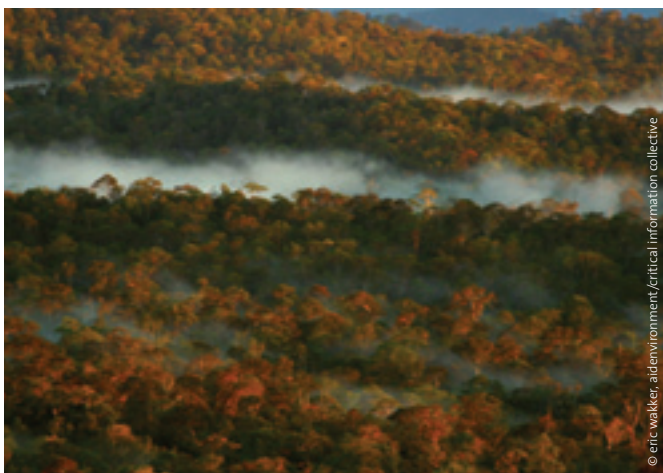
one FoEI's position on REDD: why REDD is a false solution

FoEI's position on REDD: why REDD is a false solution

Friends of the Earth International opposes REDD. Our 'No REDD' position has been developed after long and fruitful discussions amongst our members, and is based on our work with local communities and Indigenous Peoples, our collaboration with allied civil society organisations and social movements such as La Vía Campesina and World Rainforest Movement, and our involvement in tracking the development of intergovernmental climate change negotiations. We have nine key concerns:

1. REDD linked to carbon offsets cannot deliver permanent emissions reductions

To mitigate climate change, it is absolutely critical that a distinction is made between the long-term geological carbon cycle, in which undisturbed fossil fuels are locked away underground for millennia, and the temporary above-ground carbon cycle, which involves carbon being stored in trees, other plants and soils, for relatively short periods of time. If REDD project credits are used as carbon offsets, allowing continued emissions based on fossil fuels elsewhere, this distinction is lost. As the European Commission has itself observed: "[land use change and forestry] projects cannot physically deliver permanent emissions reductions."²²



Endangered forest.

2. Ongoing methodological problems mean that REDD/carbon offset projects that are not successfully reducing emissions could still be used to condone continued emissions elsewhere

Despite some gains in satellite technology, numerous methodological problems involved in quantifying the emissions saved through REDD projects continue. This includes identifying and agreeing baseline or reference levels against which measurements will be made. This is a notable feature of the N'hambita case study in Mozambique.

Allowing REDD credits to be purchased as carbon offsets can also impact marginalised communities living in polluted areas in industrialised countries. For example, by increasing the quantity of offsets available to industrial emitters in California, the ongoing development of links between California's cap-and-trade programme and REDD projects in Chiapas, Mexico and Acre, Brazil, is likely to make it easier for California's industry to continue polluting.²³ A clear example of this is Chevron's polluting refinery in Richmond, California, which Chevron is expanding so that it can process heavy crude oil from fracking and tar sands.^{24,25} Chevron, already California's largest industrial emitter of greenhouse gases,²⁶ claims there will be no 'net increase' in polluting emissions, because extra emissions will be offset through California's carbon cap-and-trade system.²⁷

3. Because REDD is designed to be 'market-friendly', it not does not address the need to reduce demand for and over-consumption of food, timber and mining products grown in place of or extracted from forests

REDD ignores underlying causes of deforestation including over-consumption by wealthy elites, and governments' overwhelming focus on ensuring that their economies can compete on global markets. This neoliberal approach continues to drive the production of goods at maximum volume and minimum cost. REDD is favoured by governments precisely because it does not challenge demand for exports of food, timber and other products that involve deforestation. The case study of Peru shows how a country's economic aspirations still take precedence. Peru's REDD projects are primarily designed to promote forestry and 'carbon positive' agriculture (see case study for more detail).

Without reducing consumption and demand for these products the problem of ‘leakage’ (deforesting activities happening elsewhere) remains, whether REDD is undertaken at the project-level or nationally.²⁸

Furthermore, if widely implemented, REDD could reduce the availability of forest, arable lands and mining deposits. While reducing production and over-consumption by wealthy elites is a desirable objective, simply reducing supply without reducing demand could have some undesirable consequences. For example, it could push up the price of raw materials on global markets, which would in turn increase the ‘opportunity costs’ that REDD finance has to compensate for. This could also lead some countries to increase their agricultural or mining production to the detriment of forests. It would also make land and resources more valuable, which could increase land grabbing. And it would increase the cost of food and products for everyone including impoverished communities.

4. REDD projects are inherently risky, for peoples and communities, and even investors

REDD is not a suitable source of finance for forest conservation, especially because it is risky and unsustainable. Bringing volatile carbon markets into the equation by linking them to REDD is even more of a gamble—if the price at which carbon is traded plummets, vital project financing can vanish without warning.²⁹ REDD linked to carbon markets would hold the future of the world’s forests and forest peoples ransom to the price of carbon and the vicissitudes of the financial sector. Turning emissions reductions from forests into an abstract commodity exposes local communities to global commercial power structures and increasing competition for land and forest carbon resources.

In addition, REDD projects themselves are inherently risky for all involved, particularly because forests are vulnerable to future weather events, fire and illegal logging. REDD can also involve huge risks for communities or peoples. Making ‘performance based’ payments to local communities creates an uncertain and unpredictable income stream and their receipt of money is contingent on factors that may be beyond their control. These risks are clearly seen in the N’hambita case study in Mozambique.

In general, adopting ‘solutions’ that are so risky jeopardises efforts to mitigate climate change. Time is of the essence, and there is no time to ‘experiment’ with different solutions. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change recently warned that countries need to agree to a global climate deal almost immediately, and participate fully, to keep climate change within safer levels.³⁰

5. REDD is expensive and can create adverse incentives for deforestation

REDD has been popular with governments because it is considered to be relatively cheap. However, the influential ‘McKinsey cost curve,’ which is supposed to demonstrate this, is deeply flawed. For example, it neglects the complexity and costs of dealing with the underlying drivers of deforestation, and overlooks important technical, legal, social and environmental costs.³¹

In addition, REDD encourages governments to maintain or at least plan for high levels of deforestation, to increase likely compensation.³² The McKinsey consultancy has encouraged governments to do this.³³

Due to the high administrative costs associated with REDD projects, a REDD market will also privilege wealthy buyers and intermediaries, rather than forest communities making a once-in-a-lifetime decision with respect to the resources they rely upon.

6. REDD exacerbates weak law enforcement, corruption and land tenure disputes

Weak governance of the forest industry, weak law enforcement, and unclear land tenure in many developing nations are themselves drivers of deforestation. Forest carbon projects like REDD exacerbate these problems,³⁴ whether privately or publicly funded, particularly because they can aggravate existing land and resource disputes, especially in cases where governments allocate carbon rights that conflict with the land rights of Indigenous and forest peoples. Examples include the implementation of REDD in Cameroon³⁵ and the Kalimantan Forests and Climate Partnership project in Indonesia. There are reported cases of small holders and local communities being threatened and criminalised as well, in countries such as Peru³⁶ and Brazil.³⁷

The complexity of both REDD and carbon markets is already creating an ideal cover for corruption and fraud, both nationally and internationally, especially where law enforcement is weak.³⁸ In Colombia, for instance, the government has been trying to stop ‘carbon cowboys’ persuading communities to sign over the management of their territories so that they can reap the rewards of carbon income.³⁹ Interpol has also noted that, *“Alarm bells are ringing. It is simply too big to monitor. The potential for criminality is vast and has not been taken into account by the people who set it up.”*⁴⁰

one FoEI's position on REDD: why REDD is a false solution

continued

7. REDD projects may ignore important cultural and social aspects of Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' relationships with forests

REDD implementation may not take important cultural and social impacts into account, and local communities and Indigenous Peoples may find that their right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent is ignored. In Costa Rica, for example, the BriBri Indigenous People's sacred sites have been targeted for REDD.⁴¹ In Peru, communities local to the BioCorridor Martin Sagrado Project were only consulted after the project was approved, meaning that their consent was not sought (see case study below). The Kuna people in Panama have decided to pre-empt such problems by rejecting all REDD projects on their Indigenous Comarcas.⁴²

8. REDD fails to distinguish between biodiverse forests and monoculture plantations

So long as the UNFCCC fails to make a distinction between biodiverse forests and virtually lifeless monoculture plantations

it is hard to see how safeguards that are supposed to protect natural forests from conversion as part of a REDD project could possibly be enforced in practice. There is also no agreed definition of 'forest degradation' in the UNFCCC.⁴³

9. REDD diverts attention away from industrialised countries' climate debt

REDD is currently the centrepiece in UN climate change negotiations, which are now focused on a 'universal agreement' involving action by both developed and developing countries. This overall shift has helped to divert attention away from industrialised countries' responsibility for climate change and their previous Kyoto Protocol commitments to reducing emissions and supporting mitigation and adaptation in other countries. The central question of climate debt is thus sidestepped and the burden has shifted so that there is an increasing requirement for action in developing countries.



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African oil palm plantation, Mexico.

two When REDD goes wrong: real world examples

When REDD goes wrong: real world examples

The case studies below and numerous other referenced examples show that several REDD projects and policies are not delivering, or are not likely to deliver, all or some of the outcomes that were anticipated, either by the project managers, or by Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

In particular, some Indigenous Peoples and local communities in southern countries are finding that they are unable to exercise all their rights over their territories when a REDD project is in place. In the first place there can be difficulties relating to transparency, with governments being unwilling to engage civil society fully, especially those organisations that oppose REDD. We have seen many examples of this, including in Cameroon,⁴⁴ Costa Rica⁴⁵ and Mozambique.⁴⁶

Furthermore, some REDD projects are criminalising local communities and Indigenous Peoples, imposing punishments and sanctions on those who continue with local forest management practices such as crop rotation for local consumption, harvesting of non-timber products, or spiritual practices. In Acre, in Brazil, for example, the Purus Project limits and monitors local migrant community activities, while 'allowing' people to continue living in an area they have actually inhabited for decades.⁴⁷ In northern Peru, community members have been charged for practicing shifting agriculture in the Cerro Escalera Regional Conservation Area.⁴⁸ In Mata Atlántica in Brazil, local people have been similarly threatened and detained.⁴⁹

In some cases REDD projects are also condemning local communities and Indigenous Peoples to dependency on alternative and potentially insufficient economic resources. This is clearly the case in the N'hambita project in Mozambique (see below) and FoE Mexico also reports that REDD in Chiapas will not generate enough money to stave off poverty.⁵⁰



© Tamra Gilbertson, carbon trade watch/critical information collective

REDD in Kampar peninsula, Indonesia, is sponsored by APRIL, Asia's second largest pulp and paper manufacturer.

two When REDD goes wrong: real world examples

continued

2.1 The Kalimantan Forests and Climate Partnership (KFCP), Indonesia

The Kalimantan Forests and Climate Partnership (KFCP) was launched in Indonesia in 2007 as a REDD ‘demonstration’ project. It was specifically intended to demonstrate how to achieve emissions reductions in carbon-storing peat swamps, and how to effectively and equitably share the benefits of REDD projects with local communities. It was also intended to enable Indonesia’s “meaningful participation” in future international carbon markets.⁵¹ However, in July 2013 the Australian government decided not to continue the project, even though it was clear that it was still far from having achieved its objectives.^{52,53}

KFCP was supposed to re-flood 200,000 ha of peat lands. Peat soil is a remarkable carbon store, but the peat had previously been drained for a rice-growing project that subsequently failed. KFCP was also meant to protect 70,000 ha of peat forests and involve the planting of 100 million saplings. Overall, it was claimed that it would lead to a reduction of 700 million tonnes of greenhouse gases over 30 years.⁵⁴

However, the project soon ran into problems. In particular, it generated considerable confusion and conflict amongst the very local communities who were supposed to be at the heart of it.⁵⁵ It was constantly accused of failing to consult and engage with communities, respect customary rights, and recognise and incorporate Dayak knowledge of peatland rehabilitation and fire management.^{56,57} Respect for customary rights is a crucial issue in Indonesia. Between 50 and 80 million people live in Indonesia’s forests, many of whom are customary land holders. A recent constitutional court case established the validity of these land rights in the Indonesian constitution, but the Indonesian government is yet to act on this development.⁵⁸

“The KFCP is a missed opportunity to empower local communities to develop their sustainable livelihood practices and address the drivers of land conversion in Kalimantan.”⁶³

Deddy Ratih, FoE Indonesia/WALHI

There were also numerous methodological and technical problems.⁵⁹ In addition, it seems that the plan to re-flood the peat lands by blocking drainage canals was never implemented. No major canals were blocked and only 15 of the 101 small traditional canals targeted were blocked. This may be for the best: there were criticisms that the planned approach ignored the potential impacts of deploying heavy machinery, neglected the fact that lack of material to fill in the canals could result in more peat being dug up, and ignored local knowledge about the traditional dam (tabat) method. The Australian government identified other problems during the course of the project, with respect to scale, capacity and payment, but the specific reasons why the project was terminated have not been specified.

There has also been continued deforestation and expansion of oil palm plantations in the project area; complex land tenure issues; and severe criticisms in the Australian parliament and press.⁶⁰ Complaints of corruption, profiteering and the intimidation of local community members have also been levelled.⁶¹

FoE groups in Indonesia and Australia, together with FoEI, have written to the Australian government requesting an open review of the failed project, focusing on its implications for the ‘incentive-based model’ of REDD, and using REDD as a form of carbon offsetting.⁶² Understanding what went wrong with the KFCP project is critical; it may provide important lessons for other REDD projects in Indonesia and across the world.



Burning and deforestation in KFCP REDD site, Indonesia.

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2.2 The N'hambita Community Carbon Project, Mozambique

A model forest carbon/REDD project in the Sofala region of Mozambique has had a troubled history, both in terms of its impacts on local communities and food sovereignty, and with respect to the financial viability of the project. For these reasons, it does indeed serve as an important lesson for the international community.

Originally established in 2002 as the N'hambita Community Carbon Project (and now part of the Sofala Community Carbon Project), the project is adjacent to the Gorongosa National Park. Years of devastating civil war combined with large-scale development projects have resulted in high levels of internal migration and intense pressure on Mozambique's natural resources. The aims of the project included conserving a community-owned forest, introducing agroforestry and other new farming practices to improve crop yields, and establishing community enterprises. It also aimed to demonstrate the effectiveness of forest carbon trading schemes, and show how to design and implement such projects.⁶⁴

Local people were contracted to plant and care for trees on their land, and communities were also tasked with protecting and patrolling a 10,000 ha area.⁶⁵ Project manager Envirotrade expected to generate profits, over and above the costs of operating the project and making payments to farmers and communities, by selling agroforestry-derived carbon credits on voluntary carbon markets.

However, a Via Campesina study⁶⁶ found the project has become increasingly unpopular. It also found that contracts signed with individual farmers to grow trees commit them and, their children to tending the trees for periods as long as 99 years, even though all payments would be made in the first seven years (reportedly because they would be negligible over a 100-year timeframe). It seems that the project managers assumed that the benefits from the trees would mean the farmers would maintain them anyway. However, it seems that this may only be the case for fruit trees.

In fact it has become clear that many of the illiterate farmers are not aware that they had any commitments after the seven years, and some were hoping that further contracts might be signed at the end of that period.⁶⁷ Many observed that they might cut the trees down to use or sell as timber or for charcoal; they regarded the wood itself as a project benefit.⁶⁸

When Via Campesina examined a farmer's contract they found that he would be paid US\$128 over seven years for planting trees in an area of 0.22 ha. At these kinds of rates the farmer would need to have access to a much greater area of land and would have to plant many more trees to alleviate poverty.⁶⁹

Furthermore the payments to farmers are conditional upon 85% of the seedlings surviving. It has proved difficult to fulfil this obligation, meaning that some farmers' income was reduced. It also seems that some were paid nothing for three or four years. This makes their already difficult situation a lot worse, especially as many reduced or stopped farming in order to tend the trees, meaning that securing food has become much more difficult. It also seems that there were delays to payments, presumably because of financial difficulties experienced by the project. This has been a great source of conflict between Envirotrade and many farmers,⁷⁰ in spite of the fact that the farmers do say there have been some benefits from the projects (in terms of fruit trees, some income, health centres and transport in case of illness). In addition, it has been observed that it was the wealthier members of the communities, who had access to land to grow the trees that benefitted the most.⁷¹

N'hambita also shows how risky relying on the 'carbon offset' approach to finance can be. The project was partly financed by the European Commission, who contributed some US\$2.2 million to kick start it. Envirotrade's financial records show that US\$1.3 million came from Plan Vivo carbon sales,⁷² and Envirotrade itself invested US\$2.1 million.⁷³ It seems that Envirotrade expected to recoup this investment by retaining one third of the profits from sales of carbon credits (with one third going to project management and one third to the communities).⁷⁴ But carbon prices subsequently crashed, seemingly leaving the project in financial difficulty, without enough income even to cover the operational costs of the project.^{75,76} It appears that some 58% of those costs were borne by Envirotrade shareholder Robin Birley.⁷⁷

two When REDD goes wrong: real world examples

continued

At one point the European Commission also threatened to cut its funding to the project because of concerns about carbon accounting.⁷⁸ It appears that these issues were subsequently resolved to the EC's satisfaction, and the project achieved Climate Community and Biodiversity Alliance (CCBA) 'triple gold status'. However, this contrasts starkly with a 2013 report from FERN and Friends of the Earth France. This report, which thoroughly analyses the whole project, looks in detail at the CCBA assessment, and finds a notable lack of rigour, with many project faults being overlooked, and vague promises from the project manager being accepted.⁷⁹

Critically, the report observes that Envirotrade cannot calculate the emissions actually avoided because of enduring problems inherent in the project methodology especially with respect to its failure to establish baselines for how much carbon was stored in the community forests that were part of the project. This makes it impossible to verify claimed carbon savings. It also found that the project did not seem to understand the various drivers of deforestation in the region, and had not considered the issue of 'leakage' (deforestation moving outside the project area). The FERN/FoE France report concludes that the project "has failed to deliver most of its climate change, development, financial and learning objectives".⁸⁰

In addition to the problems with farmers' contracts and food production, it seems that the social enterprises set up are either struggling or defunct.⁸¹ The N'hambita project as run by Envirotrade is due to wind down, direct project management having been established for a limited 15-year period.⁸²

*"The name N'hambita has travelled around the world. But what is there to see here? What have we gained? Not much. The families that already had many machambas [areas of land to grow food] made a lot of money, but for the rest of the population the benefits are small. Some don't even care about the trees any more. The payment is too small."*⁸³

A local community leader



Payment for Environmental Services project denies access in Costa Rica.

2.3 The implementation of REDD+ in Peru illustrates key dilemmas

The implementation of REDD+ in Peru shows how REDD can be used to distract attention from genuine solutions to climate change and to ‘greenwash’ company credentials. It also shows how REDD can be manipulated to further economic objectives.

For example, the BioCorridor Martin Sagrado Project in the San Martin region has been set up with a view to selling forest carbon credits to French businesses via French organisation Pur Projet. Pur Projet clearly prides itself on the quality of its projects and its collaborative work with local producers’ organisations, but it still cannot get round the fact that REDD+ has inherent flaws.⁸⁴

For example, Pur Projet itself recognises that carbon markets are ineffective, but argues that since they already exist it is better to create good projects that will benefit from flows of carbon funding.⁸⁵ However this is an extremely short-sighted approach. Carbon offsetting and related REDD projects allow industrialised countries to avoid taking real action on climate change at home, and local people in Peru will be heavily impacted as climate change bites.

This is because tropical glaciers in the Andes are retreating rapidly in line with changing temperatures, and low-level smaller glaciers may disappear in just a few decades.⁸⁶ This will have dramatic impacts on the availability of water for many people in Andean countries,⁸⁷ especially Peru, which has 71% of all tropical glaciers. This will, in turn, impact on food production and local ecosystems that people rely upon.⁸⁸ In other words, local people are being engaged in projects that will actually work against their best interests in the longer term.

Furthermore, when questioned it was clear that community members that were consulted about the project do not really understand REDD or carbon markets, meaning that they are going along with a project without comprehending its full implications.⁸⁹ In addition, although local producers’ organisations were involved in establishing the project, direct consultations with local communities were patchy and held *after* the project had been approved, meaning that they were unable to withhold consent.⁹⁰

Pur Projet is also helping French companies to portray themselves as being environmentally friendly, when they may be anything but. For example, one of its corporate partners is construction company Vinci Concessions. Vinci is due to build the highly controversial Grand Ouest airport near Nantes in France, which is strongly opposed by many local communities. Other partners include bottled water company Vittel, and energy transnational GDF Suez.⁹¹

Peru’s national economic policies also conflict sharply with the objective of conserving the country’s forests. It is pursuing a policy of rapid economic expansion and its previously low rate of deforestation is reportedly accelerating. Oil and gas concessions cover more than 70% of the Peruvian Amazon, overlapping Indigenous territories and protected areas, and Peru is building 70 hydroelectric dams to ensure its competitiveness in mining and other sectors.⁹²

Nevertheless Peru is at pains to make sure that it is shifting agriculture that gets the blame for the country’s deforestation in its REDD ‘readiness’ documentation. It receives REDD financing for ‘sustainable forest management’, which will encourage continued logging, and carbon positive agriculture, which can include oil palm plantations.⁹³ Peru’s submission to the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility’s Carbon Fund specifically identifies “increasing agricultural and forestry productivity and competitiveness” as a major way of reducing emissions.⁹⁴

In addition, Peru’s Forest Law prohibits granting land tenure in forests and protected areas (allowing ‘use’ of the land instead). This has given rise to a view that forest conservation is an obstacle to achieving Indigenous Peoples’ rights. It is also a direct impediment to forest conservation, since it undermines Indigenous Peoples’ ability to continue to care and manage forests and stave off industrial development, which is increasingly recognised as being a very effective means of conserving forests.⁹⁵



Amazon water lilies.

three Alternative approaches

Alternative approaches

There are alternatives to REDD+ that would be more effective *and* more equitable in terms of reducing deforestation and forest degradation. Governments need to focus on developing a combination of these strategies, addressing the actual underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation directly, and supporting forest management initiatives by Indigenous Peoples and local communities, which has already been shown to be more successful than the ‘protected areas’ approach.

Firstly, there needs to be a firm commitment to reducing demand for food, timber, mining and fuel products in wealthy countries, as part of a global transition to low-carbon and zero-waste economies based on less consumption.

This will also entail concerted efforts to address issues of poverty and inequality in communities that have been impoverished, often by the expansion of the same industrial export-oriented economic model that is currently driving land grabbing in order to free up land for production. Clearly these are not easy tasks, but they are absolutely essential if deforestation is really to be tackled. REDD cannot address this effectively because, even at the ‘landscape scale’, without a drop in demand for products, deforestation will surely move elsewhere.

Secondly, governments should shift their focus away from risky REDD, and prioritise support for community forest management by Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

The case studies outlined in this report show that in addition to the ethical, methodological and risk-related problems associated with REDD, REDD projects can severely disadvantage and disrupt communities, and threaten food security. We can also see that some REDD projects have turned into financial liabilities.

A far more effective and equitable approach would be to prioritise support for Indigenous Peoples and local communities, to further strengthen their proven ability to preserve and manage their forests and territories according to traditional practices.⁹⁶ There is now a growing body of evidence showing that supporting and strengthening communities’ ability to manage forests is a feasible and cost-effective approach to reducing deforestation that also complies with numerous instruments, tools and human rights policies (such as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples). For example, a meta-analysis of community-managed forests found that they present lower and less variable annual deforestation rates than protected forests.⁹⁷ Research from

CIFOR and the World Bank also shows that community forests that are managed and controlled by Indigenous Peoples and forest-dependent communities within multiple use systems are significantly more effective than projects based on a strict conservation approach.⁹⁸

States should thus commit themselves to providing public funding to strengthen community-based forest management practices in local communities and by Indigenous Peoples. This support should build upon the community-based visions of forest management and conservation held by Indigenous Peoples and local communities living in harmony with their territories. The case studies and examples in this report show that a key first step in this direction absolutely has to be clarification of land tenure and rights to resources and traditional knowledge.

Research has also shown that when gender is mainstreamed into sustainable forest management, the effectiveness of policies is enhanced, food sovereignty is increased, potential conflicts among forests users are decreased, and women have equal access to land ownership.⁹⁹

Finally, intergovernmental negotiations and national policies must focus on democratically selected and technically coherent measures that advance countries towards a sustainable energy system, swiftly eliminating the use and abuse of fossil fuels and other ‘dirty energy’ sources, including nuclear and agrofuels.

The way forward needs to be based on a vision for climate mitigation and adaptation that builds on climate justice principles, including the principle of ‘common but differentiated responsibilities and capabilities’. The countries of the global North must take leadership and responsibility for climate debt.

This alternative approach has already been proposed to the UNFCCC by the Bolivian government,¹⁰⁴ on the basis of the conclusions of the 2010 World People’s Conference on Climate Change and Rights of Mother Earth.¹⁰⁵ This proposal built upon a statement from Bolivia, entitled ‘The Sustainable Life of the Forest’, which opposes the commodification and financialisation of forests’ environmental functions. Instead it seeks comprehensive and sustainable management of forests (including land, water and biodiversity) with an emphasis on traditional and local practices, and support for the multiple functions of the forest (economic, social, environmental and cultural). It also emphasises the rights of Indigenous Peoples and Mother Earth.¹⁰⁶

BOX 2: Why resolving land tenure and promoting community forest management in Costa Rica would be beneficial¹⁰⁰

Costa Rica has been distributing land to peasant families since the 1970's, acquiring farms from private owners and establishing 'peasant settlements'. Each settlement usually includes areas left aside because of their protective functions or as nature reserves. These areas may be less than fifty hectares in size, but collectively they contain a great deal of the region's exuberant biological wealth.

The Settlement of Sanfluca, located in the Cantons of San Ramon and San Carlos, is a particularly successful example of community forest management, with its community forest, the Dendrobates Biological Reserve, covering 146ha and having the basic infrastructure needed to sustain rural tourism. The work of the members of La Asociación para la Conservación de Bosques Comunitaria in the Northern Zone is another good example.¹⁰¹

Costa Rica's community forests are still threatened however, partly because these territories still belong to the state. There is concern that work done will not be recognised, and that people will no longer be able to administer these areas for purposes of community tourism or environmental education. Also people are worried that they may no longer be able to utilise fallen wood or medicinal plants. And if there are changes to the country's environmental legislation might their forests be passed over to private hands? This would represent a serious threat, not least because of the significant amount of water produced in forests such as the Dendrobates Biological Reserve.

Bolivia pursued this approach at COP17 of the UNFCCC negotiations, in Durban in 2011, and it was formally included in the outputs of that summit. This is an important development, and a first step away from the risky and ineffective 'REDD' mentality.^{107,108}

The seeds of change have already been sown. Now it is time to ditch risky REDD for known community approaches that are effective, ethical and equitable.

BOX 3: Principles for effective local natural resource management in Indonesia

In Indonesia, local and Indigenous communities have established a culture of managing life-sustaining resources over the generations. Various cultures and local systems have been built up on the basis of practical experience as communities have interacted with nature. Support for such communities is vital in a country like Indonesia, where the expansion of export-oriented crops such as oil palm is having a devastating impact on forests and forest-dependent communities. There have also been many forced expulsions from conservation areas over the years.¹⁰²

FoE Indonesia/WALHI has compiled a set of principles for effective local management systems:¹⁰³

- *people are the main actors (local communities and Indigenous Peoples)*
- *management institutions are established, implemented and controlled directly by the respective communities*
- *there are clear territorial boundaries and legal standing*
- *there are direct and intimate interactions between the communities and their environment*
- *ecosystems are a fundamental part of local people's living systems*
- *Indigenous knowledge poses an important position underlying and enriching forest management systems and policies, in addition to modern knowledge*
- *the prioritisation of local technologies or those that have been adapted and within limits controlled by the people*
- *the scale of production is limited by the principles of sustainability*
- *economic systems are based on common welfare, and*
- *biodiversity (both species and genetic) underpins cultivation methods and the utilisation of common goods, social systems and economic systems*

The great REDD gamble

Time to ditch risky REDD for community-based approaches that are effective, ethical and equitable

Conclusion

Our analysis of REDD+ case studies shows that the REDD approach is riddled with problems, and is, in many cases, simply not working.

Friends of the Earth International is calling on governments to recognise that a twin-track approach that involves driving down excessive consumption by wealthy countries and elites, combined with the empowerment of local communities, Indigenous Peoples and forest-dependent populations is not only the most desirable and equitable way of protecting the world's forests, but also the most practicable and effective.

This approach needs to replace the current strategy of leveraging private finance by using risky and uncertain market mechanisms, including offset and compensation schemes, that promote land grabbing and involve modifying community-based regimes. Policies that do not challenge the underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation, or that promote the transformation of forests into plantations, are ineffective and should be dropped.



Left: Valmir Noventa is the Director of the Movimento dos Pequenos Agricultores in Espírito Santo, Brazil and an agroecological farmer (MPA - Small Farmers Movement).

Below: João Guimarães is a Quilombola leader who has been involved with agroecology in Espírito Santo, Brazil.



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