

Policy Brief, 25. Nov. 2015:

Science review reveals slow progress within REDD+ projects and the need for encouraging signals from Paris

“REDD+ is not as easy as just counting stored carbon in tropical forests as the basis for well-meant payments” says Richard Fischer, senior scientist at the German Federal Thünen Institute in Hamburg. Fischer conducted a scientific review of 17 related, multi-national studies which was published by the institute last Friday. REDD+ is the UN Climate Convention’s approach to “Reduce Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation”. The reviewed publications present experience from hundreds of REDD+ projects across country borders. The research offers condensed information as a basis for climate discussions.

The hundreds of REDD+ projects that have been established across the globe in this context since 2008 are, in general, proceeding slowly. This is in part due to the challenging technical framework that needs to be taken into account. This framework obviously still needs time to be developed and implemented under differing local conditions. And, on the other hand, it is clearly difficult to implement core features like results-based payments while uncertainty prevails as to the continuation and financial configuration of the global programme. The authors conclude that signals are urgently needed from the currently convening Conference of the Parties on how to deal with these durability and financial issues.

In detail, results show that experiences with the implementation of core REDD+ topics like institutional responsibility and results-based financing are not yet encouraging. Monitoring systems require further development, and guidance needs to be provided for jurisdictional approaches. More general topics like stakeholder participation, tenure clarification and biodiversity co-benefits have, in con-

trast, progressed further. But these are not necessarily effects of REDD+ components in the projects. The projects clearly offer a platform to advance classical development issues. This carries the danger that initiatives are losing their carbon storage and emission reduction focus even while they continue to sail under the REDD+ flag. Harmonized safeguard reporting and impact assessments are needed to differentiate effects of REDD+ activities from mostly older, input-based, project components.

The up-scaling and generalizing of experiences of a wide variety of partly self-proclaimed REDD+ ground level initiatives, mostly based on differing REDD+ definitions, remains methodologically challenging. Yet, this approach provides the best available information. The UNFCCC session in Bonn 2015 already stated that “methodologies are now complete and implementation must begin”. Both are needed, technical support for the further development of the framework in the developing countries and a step away from the “project laboratory” to the “open air reality” on scales that make a difference.



For further details see the full study in the attachment or on the journal’s webpage or contact the authors at: richard.fischer@ti.bund.de

The article is the most recently published study within an article selection on REDD+ related forestry research compiled by Forest Policy and Economics

<http://www.journals.elsevier.com/forest-policy-and-economics/virtual-special-issues/research-selection-on-forest-policy-and-climate-change>

Fischer, R., Hargita, Y., Günter, S., *Insights from the ground level? A content analysis review of multi-national REDD+ studies since 2010*, *Forest Policy and Economics* (2015), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.forpol.2015.11.003>

Figure: Appraisals of the reviewed studies were sorted from those with strongest disagreement to strongest agreement. Safeguards, institutions and finance were rated most critically, whereas tenure rights and biodiversity were regarded more positively. The UNFCCC Warsaw Framework was used to structure the content of the review. The review relies on multi-national studies only.

