

# BioSoc: the Biodiversity and Society Bulletin

Research highlights on biodiversity and society, poverty and conservation

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## RED ALERT? REDUCING EMISSIONS FROM DEFORESTATION MAY IMPACT NEGATIVELY ON LOCAL COMMUNITIES.

Land use change – particularly that associated with deforestation – is responsible for a significant portion of global carbon emissions. Although preventing deforestation was not considered as an eligible means of reducing carbon emissions under the first phase of the Kyoto Protocol (2008-2012), “avoided deforestation” has recently become a hot issue in ongoing policy debates about climate change. Proponents of “reduced emissions from deforestation” (RED) schemes want incentives for forest conservation to be included within the second phase of the Kyoto Protocol (post-2012).

This would seem to be good news for forest-dwelling communities whose continued existence depends on the long-term conservation of tropical forests. Funding for conservation would be likely to increase significantly if RED projects are accepted under the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol, and developing country earnings could be significant. A recent report by the Forest People’s Programme (FPP), however, raises concerns about the distribution of costs and benefits associated with RED schemes and highlights some potentially unforeseen consequences for local communities including:

- renewed or increased “top-down” approaches to forest conservation including exclusionary models such as strictly protected areas with no human habitation;
- unjust targeting of local communities as drivers of deforestation;
- land speculation, land grabbing and land conflicts;
- violations of customary land and territorial rights;
- corruption and embezzlement of international funds by national elites;
- inequitable and abusive community contracts.

FPP notes that “though social and poverty reduction issues are mentioned in most avoided deforestation proposals they are generally scant on details about *how* peoples’ rights will be fully respected and safeguarded, and *how* equitable and sustainable local benefits might be ensured under RED schemes”. FPP further points out the track record of international organisations such as the World Bank in devising global forest policy has not been good – especially as far as ensuring the informed participation of affected communities is concerned.

Some proponents point to the variety of certification schemes and standards that are being developed to accompany carbon conservation schemes as the way to address social issues and safeguards in RED initiatives, but the problem remains that these schemes are voluntary, can be difficult to enforce and, given how new this issue is, have not been widely tested on the ground.

FPP suggests that an essential first step is a serious dialogue amongst the global networks of forest communities on the pros and cons of avoided deforestation schemes and their continued and full participation in national and international policy debates. The future development of RED schemes looks set to be a hard test for claims of good forest governance.

## SOURCE

Griffiths, T. (2007) *Seeing RED? Avoided deforestation and the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities*. Forest Peoples Programme, Moreton-in-Marsh, UK

The report is available to download from

[http://www.forestpeoples.org/documents/ifi\\_igo/avoided\\_deforestation\\_red\\_jun07\\_eng.pdf](http://www.forestpeoples.org/documents/ifi_igo/avoided_deforestation_red_jun07_eng.pdf)

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