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Policy pointers

Understanding local people's preferences is essential for equitable, effective and efficient REDD+ interventions. Project designers must capture what local people think is important and fair, in those people's own terms and according to their criteria.

People do not necessarily want just cash — in some cases other non-cash benefits may meet their preferences more effectively.

REDD+ pilot projects must consult both men and women in their decision-making process and identify other community divisions such as ethnicity, land tenure, and the nature of agricultural or forest-based production.

A hybrid approach combining focus group discussions with choice experiments could be a relatively low-cost way to assess people's preferences for REDD+ interventions and needs further exploration.

What people want from REDD+: assessing local views and preferences

Studies in five countries reveal very variable views on key aspects of REDD+, such as preferences for types of community and individual commitment, and for cash versus in-kind payment. Factors such as gender, ethnicity and land tenure mean preferences vary both between and within communities. REDD+ policy and projects need to assess and consider these views. Methods might include choice experiment surveys that ask people to prioritise pre-chosen packages of options, open-ended focus group discussions and a hybrid approach that attempts to combine the advantages of both.

The REDD+ mechanism, which forms a key component of the international climate negotiations, aims to give developing countries incentives for reducing forest-related greenhouse gas emissions. Its scope has broadened from reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation (REDD) to include reducing emissions through sustainable management, conservation and enhancing forest carbon stocks (REDD+).

Many developing countries with forest resources have started 'readiness' activities¹ — developing national REDD+ strategies and experimenting with different types of REDD+ pilots. The aim is to identify interventions that will most effectively reduce emissions, while delivering development benefits and meeting the environmental and social safeguards agreed in international negotiations.

One important challenge is to understand local people's concerns and expectations about commitments and benefits. Clearly, for REDD+ programmes and projects to succeed, they must

understand and address people's concerns about how REDD+ will affect their livelihoods. If national and local REDD+ programmes do not include equitable systems to share benefits new problems could arise in the future — damaging activities could restart outside the project area (leakage) and projects may end prematurely.

So IIED and partners, including the Norwegian University of Life Sciences, have examined how to establish local people's preferences when designing or considering adjustments to REDD+ pilot projects. Our research in Brazil, Ghana, Tanzania, Uganda and Vietnam,² described here, provides lessons for policymakers and project implementers and shows the advantages and drawbacks of different approaches.

Choice experiment surveys

One approach is to conduct a choice experiment survey with a randomly chosen and relatively large sample of households, asking standardised questions about preferences for different aspects of the REDD+ payment mechanisms as

Understand local people's expectations about the commitments they make and the benefits received

well as about socioeconomic characteristics. Individuals are asked to choose between four or five packages (including the status quo) that combine different options for the payment mechanism, such as the level of payment, its

frequency, whether cash or in-kind, and the preferred institutional arrangements. Table 1 shows the choices offered in a survey of three reserves in the Bolsa Floresta programme in Amazonas, Brazil that

focused on options for dividing benefits between cash payments to households and support to different types of community investment.

Such an approach has the advantage of enabling rigorous statistical analysis. And since people choose between options that involve trade-offs, there is less scope for strategic responses than in more open-ended discussions or questions.³ The disadvantages are the limited possibility of getting in depth explanations for choices, and high cost of large surveys.

Focus group discussions

An alternative approach, adopted for the pilots in Tanzania and Ghana, is for focus groups to discuss questions similar to those in the choice

surveys, for example: what activities should be compensated, how should compensation be provided and with what institutional arrangements? This leaves flexibility to adapt to the situation and to probe issues. People can deliberate within the group, making their decisions on a more informed basis and having the scope to change their opinion. This approach also enables discussion about why people prefer particular options. The disadvantages are that the questions, and hence the responses, cannot fully be standardised, making statistical analysis harder.

And while group discussions generate a rich set of ideas and options, they do not normally force participants to prioritise. Another drawback is that some members' views may predominate while some may not be heard — much depends on the facilitator's skills. There is also the related issue of representativeness. Detailed information may be obtained about some groups but it may not be representative of the whole area. To mitigate this, groups can be selected to capture key sources of variation in the community such as gender and ethnicity. In the study of the Ghana pilot, for example, 11 focus group discussions, with 136 participants in total, were held in six cocoa farming communities. Five groups had only men, five had women and one was a mixed gender group. Seven of the discussions were with single

Table 1. REDD+ options surveyed in three reserves within the Bolsa Floresta programme in Amazonas, Brazil

ALTERNATIVES		Average amount allocated for each component per household per year (Brazilian real)			
		INCOME GENERATION	SOCIAL	ASSOCIATION	FAMILY
1	Status quo option (no change)	350	350	60	600
2	Reduce R\$100 of 'social' to invest in 'income'	450	250	60	600
3	Reduce R\$100 of 'income' and invest it in 'social'	250	450	60	600
4	Reduce R\$50 of the 'income' and R\$50 of 'social' to invest in 'association'	300	300	160	600
5	Or reduce R\$60 of 'income' and R\$60 from 'social' to invest in 'family'	290	290	60	720

Description of the components for Table 1

Income generation: promotes sustainable production of non-timber forest products and aims to make production chains more efficient. Paid to the community.

Association: payments go to grassroots organisations to strengthen community action and capacity.

Social: supports infrastructure improvements and aims to provide services that would otherwise be financed by deforestation.

Family: monthly payments are made to the mother in participating households.

Table 2. Alternative benefit packages used in the Vietnam study

Package	Commitment	Payment to	In cash or kind	Agency	Frequency	Payment level	Contract length
1	Forest enrichment plantings:	Household	Cash	Local government	Quarterly	200K VND/ha/qtr	10 years
2	Forest enrichment plantings	Community and household	Cash for households and infrastructure for community	Local government	Quarterly, once for infrastructure	100K VND/ha/qtr + infrastructure (eg school) worth 650million VND	Cash: 10 years, infrastructure 5 year upgrade
3	Reduced exploitation of timber and NTFPs	Household	Agricultural extension, communal facilities + organic fertiliser	Agricultural extension department / local NGO	N/A	Year 1: 2 trainings Year 2 +: communal facilities and organic fertilisers	5 years
4	Reduced exploitation of timber and NTFPs	Household	Loans	Bank	According to business cycle	50 million VND at interest rate 4% pa	5 years
5	Status quo / do nothing	No payment	No payment	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Adapted from Enright, A. 2013² VND is Vietnam Dong, NTFP is non-timber forest product

ethnic groups (Brusa, Ashanti, Ewe and Fante), two groups had a mix of Sefwi and Brusa and two mixed representatives from eight ethnic groups.

Hybrid approach

A third, hybrid approach adopted by pilots in Vietnam, Uganda and Brazil, follows up the focus group discussions with a group-based choice experiment in which people vote individually. This aims to combine free-ranging discussion with prioritisation. In Vietnam for example, the researchers developed a set of REDD+ options drawing from the focus group discussions and interviews. These options proposed different combinations of activities eligible for compensation, cash and in-kind benefits within a total value of VN\$200,00/ha/year, among other key aspects of the benefit package (see Table 2). Focus group members voted for their favoured options. The results were analysed immediately and fed back, prompting discussion about why people had voted the way they did.

What people wanted

Cash benefits. People gave cash payments very different priorities within different overall packages. In the Vietnam pilot, participants had little interest in cash, and many expressed concern that cash would be used for 'non-essential' items and not to promote a long-lasting livelihood benefit. But the response may have

been because cash formed part of a package that involved taking part in forest patrols. In Brazil over half of the participants, both in the household survey and the group-based choice experiment, preferred increased cash payments (see Table 1 for the options). But this may have been a preference for a direct, rather than a community, benefit. In the other pilots people preferred a combination of cash and other benefits. For example in Uganda the most popular option was a mix of cash, tree seedlings and a revolving fund for income-generating activities. In Tanzania, all but one of the focus groups preferred combining cash payments to individuals with community development projects.

Agricultural improvements. Agricultural improvement was important to focus groups in the pilot projects in three countries. In Tanzania, eight of 12 focus groups saw agricultural support as important for reducing forest use and dependence. Participants felt technical assistance on conservation agriculture, agroforestry or irrigation would enable them to stop shifting cultivation.

But where focus groups discussions were followed with choice experiments the outcome was more varied. In Vietnam, four out of five groups clearly preferred a package involving agricultural extension services, crop drying facilities and organic fertilisers. These benefits

were seen as addressing poor yields for coffee and tea production. But in the Uganda pilot, a package involving agricultural improvement was not the most popular option. When discussing their choice experiment, participants said they saw little point in boosting outputs if there was no accompanying improvement in market access.

Differentiated payments. Focus group discussions brought out a range of views on how compensation should be differentiated. Three Tanzanian groups initially suggested differentiating according to opportunity costs (compensating people for losses incurred from giving up charcoal and timber activities). But other participants countered that people should be paid equally, irrespective of their losses, and this became the consensus view. Four other groups thought that those who use and degrade common property forest resources for individual gain should be penalised rather than paid. In Ghana, most focus groups said compensation should be based on the area of cocoa land a household gave up for the REDD+ project, or on the value of lost cocoa production. But a mixed group of women migrants wanted compensation differentiated by family needs.

Gender and ethnicity

Selecting groups according to gender and ethnicity revealed key differences in preferences within communities. In Ghana, the indigenous ethnic groups mostly favoured combining individual and community compensations, while the in-migrants mostly favoured individual cash compensation, reflecting concerns about their less-secure land tenure. In Ghana, women were more concerned than men about including all community members, as well as future generations, in the REDD+ process.

In Vietnam, women in open-ended group discussions raised interesting ideas and wide-ranging potential benefits, particularly when participating in women-only groups. But it proved difficult to persuade them to speak out when in a mixed group. Most women in the women-only

group in the Vietnam pilot favoured in-kind benefits in the form of agricultural improvement. Slightly more men than women opted for a package providing a loan at a favourable interest rate but this may also have been influenced by ethnicity. Twelve out of 14 people preferring the loan package were from the Kinh ethnic group, the dominant (and predominantly settler) group in the area. Other ethnic minority (indigenous) groups may have been unfamiliar with loans.

Lessons learned

These experiences show that it is both important and difficult to understand local preferences for REDD+ designs. Our studies revealed how diverse communities are in REDD+ pilot projects, and how preferences vary both within and between communities, depending on a complex mix of factors. REDD+ pilot projects must consult both men and women in their decision-making process and identify other community divisions that could affect preferences such as ethnicity, land tenure, and the nature of agricultural or forest-based production. Each group may need to be consulted separately. Understanding this complex pattern of preferences at a national scale could prove costly using household surveys. But our shared experience suggests carefully selected focus group discussions and group-based choice experiments could be a relatively low-cost way to assess people's preferences for REDD+ interventions and to help design compensation options that are acceptable to different types of land users.

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Knowledge Products

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Notes

¹ FCCC/CP2010/7/Add.1 para 73 / ² This briefing draws from the following studies produced as part of the project, Poverty and Sustainable Development Impacts of REDD Architecture: Dyngeland, C and Waized, B (2013) Views and preferences for compensation under REDD+ in Tanzania: Kilosa pilot project case study. IIED, London. <http://pubs.iied.org/G03704>; Enright, A (2013) REDD+ compensation packages in Lam Dong Province, Vietnam. Assessing the preferences of forest communities. IIED, London. <http://pubs.iied.org/G03699>; Kjosavik, DJ *et al* (2013) Payment formats for REDD+ interventions: preferences and concerns in Aowin District, Ghana. IIED, London. <http://pubs.iied.org/G03767>; Lima, L *et al* (2013) Local preferences for REDD+ payment formats in Brazil: the Bolsa Floresta Programme, RDS Rio Negro. IIED, London. <http://pubs.iied.org/G03765>; Namaalwa, J and Nabanoga, GN (2013) Assessing local preferences for payment formats in REDD+ interventions: a case study of the Ongo Community Forest. IIED, London. <http://pubs.iied.org/G03711> / ³ Mohammed, EY *et al* (2013) Assessing preferences for compensation packages using the discrete choice method: the case of the Bolsa Floresta Program in Amazonas, Brazil. *Journal of Environmental Assessment Policy and Management* 15:4