

UN-REDD  
PROGRAMME



The United Nations Collaborative Programme  
on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation  
and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries

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# UN-REDD PROGRAMME

# Newsletter

Issue # 13 October 2010

## Features & Commentary

### Biodiversity Benefits of REDD+

The UN-REDD Programme recently convened a workshop exploring the biodiversity benefits of REDD+ in Nairobi, and [Elifuraha Isaya Laltaika](#), the elected representative of indigenous peoples in Africa to the UN-REDD Programme Policy Board, highlights the challenges and opportunities discussed.



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The idea of Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation in Developing countries (REDD+) has generated a considerable degree of interest as well as significant international discussions since its introduction under the UNFCCC in 2007. It is a scheme that aims at rewarding developing countries in their efforts to conserve their forests. REDD+ was necessitated by the recognition that almost 20 per cent of all global carbon emissions are a result of deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries. REDD+ is therefore a welcome move seen as a positive fiscal incentive for environmental protection. It provides for a unique opportunity to transform the forest sector and forest landscapes in anticipation for maximum financial gains.

However, since the primary aim of REDD or REDD+ is to reduce carbon through making money, REDD+ has the potential to bring about imbalance between the need for finances on the one hand, and the need for biodiversity conservation on the other. This article is a reflection on the need for a 360 degree view of forests to include their value beyond carbon and money, also referred to as 'multiple benefits of forests'.

#### Biodiversity Benefits of REDD+ Workshop

From the 20-23 of September 2010 in Nairobi, the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the UN-REDD Programme jointly convened an expert workshop on Biodiversity Benefits of REDD+. The following ideas were refined by listening to the enriching presentations there and taking part in lively group discussions.

#### Forests offer more than carbon

Biodiversity has been defined to include a variety of genetically distinct populations and species of plants, animals, ecosystems and micro-organisms with which human beings share the earth. In other words, forests conserve as part of biodiversity, both visible and invisible organisms. Some of these organisms can not be said to be of immediate economic value such as snails and butterflies or sparsely available medicinal herbs and tubers. However, their existence in the ecosystem is not in any way insignificant from the ecological standpoint. Therefore, to confine what the forest has to offer to only carbon and money is to expect to live by bread alone; mankind needs more than only bread.

#### Plantations: Enough for today, but what about tomorrow?

In an effort to offset more carbon and get more money, actors will invariably indulge in reducing indigenous forests in order to plant trees that have the ability to offset more carbon. This is precarious to biodiversity since some species are native to some places because of the natural vegetation there. This means that the disappearance of such vegetation will spell

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1 - 3 November 2010, Washington, D.C., USA

[UN-REDD Programme 5<sup>th</sup> Policy Board Meeting](#)

4-5 November 2010, Washington,

automatic disappearance of such biodiversity.

Similarly, since scientific discoveries are on-going, replacing indigenous trees with plantations also entails interference with possible or potential scientific discoveries and breakthroughs. For indigenous peoples and forest dependent communities, replacing indigenous forests with plantations solely to offset carbon and get money means the erosion of culture and natural wealth for a "one-day meal."

#### Eviction of local communities

Another challenge of considering forests in terms of carbon offset and money-making alone relates to developing a system that truly provides benefits to local communities and indigenous peoples. If emphasis is given to generating money, indigenous peoples and local communities will be sidelined by corporations and other actors. Their right to effective participation in development processes, including the right to free, prior and informed consent is likely to be undermined. There is also the likelihood for them to be evicted from their ancestral land if doing so will entail offsetting more carbon and making more money.

#### Striking a balance

The main obstacles for achieving multiple benefits are that the real value of forest ecosystem services are not known or appreciated in decision-making. However, for REDD+ to be free from risks, there is a need to look at the multiple values and services of forests as a whole. Such a holistic approach will not only address the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation but will also ensure conservation of important biodiversity for potential scientific breakthroughs as well as for the best interest and welfare of indigenous peoples and other forest dependent local communities.

[Click here for the full report from the Biodiversity Benefits of REDD+ workshop.](#)



Elifuraha Isaya Laltaika

*Elifuraha Isaya Laltaika (LL.M in Environmental Law) is the elected indigenous peoples of Africa representative to the UN-REDD Programme Policy Board. The author wishes to express his thanks to the UN-REDD Programme for the invitation to the recent biodiversity workshop in Nairobi, as well as for the financial support to enable him to attend.*  
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D.C., USA

**FIP Sub-Committee Meeting**  
8 November 2010, Washington,  
D.C., USA

**14<sup>th</sup> International Anti-Corruption Conference**  
10-13 November 2010, Bangkok,  
Thailand

**UN-REDD/Chatham House Monitoring Governance Workshop**  
18-19 November 2010, Rome, Italy

**COP 16 UNFCCC**  
29 Nov- 10 Dec 2010, Cancun,  
Mexico

**Forest Day 4, "After Copenhagen: Maintaining the Momentum"**  
5 December 2010, Cancun, Mexico  
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