

REDD+

The United Nations claims that the main aim of the "Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD)" mechanism is to make forests more valuable standing than they would be cut down by creating a financial value for the carbon stored in the trees. Once this carbon is standardized and quantified, REDD+ will allow polluters to purchase cheap carbon offsets (or "pollution licenses") from countries in the South instead of reducing their own greenhouse gas emissions at source.

Although there is a general consensus that deforestation must be addressed, the idea behind this scheme is not based on how best to protect the remaining forests or how best to tackle the real drivers of deforestation, but leaves this complex task to the "invisible hand" of the market. Through privatizing the carbon stored in forests, the scheme generates credits that are sold to fossil-fuels dependent industries, allowing them to profit from continued business-as-usual while presenting themselves as "green". Moreover, by extending enclosures and turning biodiverse ecosystems into carbon stocks, REDD+ endangers Indigenous Peoples and forest-based communities, collective territories, cultures and environments.

REDD+ is currently one of the most crucial and contested topics of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) negotiations. However, it is already happening simultaneously on different levels outside the UNFCCC framework: pilot projects, national and sub-national programmes, and under bilateral and multilateral agreements, with some generated credits already being sold in the voluntary carbon markets. Despite strong opposition from grassroots movements, REDD+ projects are being implemented under schemes such as the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) and the UN-REDD programme..

In a nutshell, this mechanism is allowing high-polluting companies and governments to purchase carbon credits in order to continue business-as-usual rather than reducing their emissions at source, with the excuse that somewhere else there is a "forest" that, in theory, will "offset" their emissions. Furthermore, these credits can also be used by financial speculators to generate more profits, and risk creating new financial bubbles.

Moreover, REDD+ projects have already proven to be fundamentally unjust. Indigenous and forest-based communities have few formal titles to their lands and many are still struggling for legal mechanisms that recognise their rights and territories. In this regard, REDD+ has already encouraged forest enclosures, militarization, fraud, coercion, forced displacements and evictions in Kenya, Congo, Papua New Guinea, Brazil and many others. Â

REDD+ (plus) goes beyond the concepts of avoided deforestation and forest degradation, to include the possibility of offsetting emissions through "sustainable forest management", "conservation" and "increasing forest carbon stocks". It sounds good at first glance, this is opening the door to logging operations in primary forests, displacement of local populations for "conservation", increase of tree plantations (the UN definition of forests includes monoculture plantations!)

Even if REDD+ could be kept out of a global offsets market, it still would not provide funding for communities or protect the remaining forests because the major proponents of REDD+ have vested interests in the scheme and intend to be rewarded. In any case, REDD+ is inherently linked to offsets trading and has been since its inception.

Read No REDD, A Reader, a co-edited publication of the Indigenous Environmental Network and Carbon Trade Watch, that comprises articles written by REDD Monitor, Global Justice Ecology Project, Censat Agua Viva, Amazon Watch, Acciã³n EcolÃ³gica, COECOCEIBA-AT, OFRANEH, World Rainforest Movement, Carbon Trade Watch, RisingTide, ETC Group and Indigenous Environmental Network - December 2010

From an indigenous and human rights perspective, REDD penalises the peoples who protect and rely on forests. REDD

is promoting what could be the biggest land grab of all time with no enforceable safeguards at the national or sub-national level that would guarantee protection of the rights of Indigenous Peoples and forest-dependent communities. The prospects of large sums of money offered by REDD schemes are forcing Indigenous and forest-dependent peoples into obscure land contracts and evictions. Several examples of this already happening are highlighted in this reader

Read and sign the Declaration against Schemes for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation from the Durban Group for Climate Justice.

The proposed UN climate negotiator's "forest deal" jeopardizes the human future by serving to further entrench forest use as the major cause of the climate crisis while at the same time failing to safeguard the future of forests and the rights of Indigenous Peoples and forest-dependent communities over their territories and knowledge. Further, there is a clear disregard from Northern countries to address the high levels of consumption in those countries as a driver of deforestation.

Read the No REDD booklet from the Indigenous Environmental Network

Many countries do not even recognize the existence of Indigenous Peoples - let alone their rights. National efforts to legislate and implement FPIC [Free, Prior and Informed Consent] and UNDRIP [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People] may take years or decades to achieve and, in some cases, may never happen. So, saying that FPIC and UNDRIP will protect indigenous peoples is not true.

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