

# Key Arguments Against Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD+):\*



**STAY OUT!**  
Land Grabbing

## REDD+ IS BAD FOR FORESTS

### 1. REDD+ will benefit logging companies, forest destroyers and the drivers of deforestation

In many countries, benefits from REDD+ projects will flow to the government, the private project developer and second-party industries, instead of to the communities who have managed the land for generations. This benefits the industries responsible for deforestation in the first place, including logging companies. Tina Vahenen, from the UN REDD Secretariat, addressed an auditorium of timber executives and foresters at the World Forestry Congress in 2009 and stated, "REDD would be very beneficial for forestry." Not forests—forestry. Ms. Vahenen explained to the room that REDD would be worth \$45 billion for the timber industry and insisted that, "the forestry sector cannot afford to lose this opportunity."

### 2. REDD+ accelerates logging and creates perverse incentives

REDD+ accelerates logging insofar as countries that increase deforestation now will be in a better position to earn revenue if REDD+ comes into effect. The President of Guyana, for example, has argued that the country should "proceed full-steam ahead with exploitation of forestry resources" in order to reap the benefits of "avoided threatened deforestation."

### 3. REDD+ fails to stop forest destroyers and the drivers of deforestation

REDD+ does not regard industrial tree and agriculture plantation interests, loggers, fossil fuel companies, the paper industry, dam builders, etc. as a problem and has no provisions for challenging them. Such actors are likely to use REDD+ to obtain control over natural old growth forests and proceed to cut them down for industry. This includes mining, oil and gas interests, as well as companies promoting monocultures including tree plantations and export crops.

### 4. REDD+ will increase monoculture tree plantations

The UN definition of forests includes plantations. Not only is the UN definition of forests so vague that it does not differentiate between a biodiverse forest ecosystem and monoculture plantations of oil palm, pine, eucalyptus and soy; it also fails to make a distinction between forests and felled or "temporarily unstocked" areas and plantations of genetically-engineered (GE) trees. Under this fundamentally flawed definition, national and corporate elites can replace forests with monoculture plantations, leading to environmental and social disasters and ignoring local communities' needs including food, medicines, traditions, shelter and even forest-dependent water supplies.

### 5. REDD+ will provide little funding for forest defenders at the community level

Instead, it would go largely to their antagonists. The UN itself admits that REDD+'s main thrust is toward "making the private sector part of the solution by providing the kinds of market signals, mechanisms and incentives to encourage investments that manage and conserve the world's nature-based resources rather than mining them." And, if, as is likely, the carbon bubble bursts, it is disproportionately forest-dependent communities that will have to pick up the pieces. REDD+ revenues would in any case be low – \$4 USD, or 6 to 8 times cheaper than other offsets – because REDD+ has been designed precisely to provide the cheapest possible pollution rights for the North's fossil-fuelled industries.

### 6. REDD+ sets a precedent for using other environmental services as offsets

Future projects to commodify watersheds, wetlands or dunes could be fast-tracked if forest carbon commodification becomes profitable through REDD+. Biodiversity would almost certainly suffer as a result.

\* REDD is a global initiative to create a financial value for the carbon stored in forests to compensate governments and companies or owners of forests in developing countries not to cut their carbon-rich forests or to reduce their rate of deforestation and forest degradation as a market mechanism to avoid GHG emissions. REDD+ expands REDD to develop methods for carbon sequestration through conservation of forest (and wetlands, agricultural systems) carbon stocks, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries.

# REDD+ IS BAD FOR THE CLIMATE

## 7. REDD+ confuses fossil carbon with biotic carbon

Whether REDD+ is part of the carbon market or not, it is designed to compensate for the carbon dioxide emitted by the burning of fossil fuels. The theoretical CO<sub>2</sub> “saved” when forests that supposedly would otherwise be destroyed or degraded are left standing is intended to give industrial polluters the opportunity to continue polluting, and thus to add to the pool of fossil-origin carbon accumulating in the oceans and the air, contributing further to climate change.

## 8. REDD+ is designed as an offset

Forest-based and REDD+ project credits available on the voluntary market are already legitimizing more pollution in the North, allowing wealthy countries and polluting companies to claim emissions reductions on paper and to avoid taking action against burning fossil fuels. REDD+ creates permits to pollute. Fund-based approaches to REDD+ are not alternatives to carbon market-based REDD+ but rather serve as start-up money to launch REDD+ projects designed to enter the carbon market.

**9. REDD+ science is flawed** Even on their own terms, the scientific methodologies being used to measure the hypothetical “carbon saved” by forest conservation are not up to the job. The carbon stored in forests (largely in soils) is part of a natural cycle between the atmosphere, the oceans and the biosphere whose dynamics are difficult to predict and quantify and differ from location to location. In addition, there is the question of “permanence”: it is impossible to predict how long the trees will remain living (i.e. storing carbon) in one place.

## 10. REDD+ cannot address “leakage”

There exists no science for predicting the carbon emissions that occur when deforestation is stopped in one area but increases elsewhere as a result (known as “leakage” in the climate jargon), since the underlying drivers of deforestation are not being addressed. And because project developers rely on concession history, regional deforestation rates, and other crude market-based indicators to calculate carbon futures, we can never really know if forests were in fact “protected” above and beyond “what would have happened otherwise”.

# REDD+ IS BAD FOR PEOPLE

## 11. REDD+ creates a structure for increased land grabs

REDD+ fuels land grabs. Land grabs not only violently evict and forcibly displace the very peoples and communities who have conserved and managed the forests for millennia, landgrabs also violate their rights to lands, territories, natural resources and food as well as traditional knowledge, cultures and subsistence. The REDD+ negotiating text does not protect Indigenous Peoples’ rights. The safeguards are only annexed and are not mandatory, nor do they include the right to free, prior and informed consent, let alone implement United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Even if the safeguards were mandatory and strong, it is unlikely that they would be implemented, since many countries do not even recognize the existence of Indigenous Peoples.

## 12. REDD+ restricts access to forests for livelihoods and cultural practices

Indigenous and forest-dwelling Peoples around the world depend on their forests and territories for their livelihoods, spiritual and cultural practices, but few of the world’s forests are legally owned by forest-dependent and Indigenous communities. REDD+ does not open up negotiating space for communities but rather creates another barrier. In order to protect investments, some project developers have prohibited communities from using their forests by new REDD+-friendly laws, fences and even armed guards.

## 13. REDD+ causes violence against Indigenous and forest-dwelling Peoples

Already, REDD+ projects have encouraged forest enclosures, land grabbing, arrests, and evictions. As a result of implementing REDD+, people have been expelled and arrested for using resources on their lands from Kenya to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Papua New Guinea, Mexico and Indonesia to name a few.

## 14. REDD+ projects tend to force subsistence communities into the cash economy and wage-labor, with many adverse results

Losing control over their lands, resources and traditions, forest-dependent and Indigenous Peoples are forced to enter different types of mostly underpaid wage labor – guardians of industrial or agricultural plantations or “forest guards” on what used to be their own lands. This sets in motion, or worsens, a cycle of poverty, internal migration and displacements, and dependence on markets. Many REDD+ projects do provide a combination of jobs, services, and/or cash payments to affected community members but these “benefits” tend to be less than the worth of sustenance derived then when people have free access to the forest. Some provide payments to meet basic needs, or directly provide services like health clinics or schools. Still others offer gifts like laptop computers and fuel-efficient cooking stoves. By buying people out of their forest-dependent livelihoods, REDD+ will leave forests *more* vulnerable to predatory interests – not less.

## 15. REDD+ is also bad for people in industrialized societies

People living close to polluting industries in the North and South have to endure industrial pollution in their communities, causing long-term health problems such as asthma, birth defects, cancer and depression. REDD prolongs these impacts by making offsets available to these polluting companies, allowing them to avoid reducing their polluting emissions.

## 16. REDD+ uses public money to make climate change worse

Both the World Bank and Northern governments have set up funds to “start up” REDD+ projects with little or no public consultation and use public money to jump-start REDD+ for the carbon market.



**No to REDD+!** REDD+ is still being negotiated. There are many who defend REDD+ for valuing ecosystems services; there are others who see it as the only way to protect forests and stabilize the climate. But whatever form REDD+ takes, even if it includes Human Rights safeguards, it will be designed to allow industrialized countries and polluting industries like Shell, BP and Rio Tinto to continue polluting. Corporations and Northern countries responsible for the climate crisis need to take responsibility for their own emissions by addressing the structural changes necessary to be made in the North and stopping pollution at the source. **Human rights, environmental rights and cultural practices of forest-dependent and Indigenous Peoples must be protected from REDD+.**



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