11

DOING REDD+ WORK IN VIETNAM

Will the New Carbon Focus Bring Equity to Forest Management?

Pamela McElwee

Attention to land-based carbon management has become an urgent global issue in the past 10 years, particularly in the development of "avoided deforestation" policies, referred to as Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation, or REDD+. Pilot programs to prepare countries for REDD+ readiness are now emerging in many different nations, funded by bilateral and multilateral donors, and involving new institutions like the UN-REDD program and the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) of the World Bank (Cerbu et al. 2011). Yet key questions have been raised about how REDD+ will actually work, given that nations themselves will determine much of the on-the-ground activity toward meeting international benchmarks (Corbera and Schroeder 2011). Further, many of the REDD+ readiness projects being implemented focus on different interests reflecting the wide variety of donors supporting such actions.

Given these heterogeneous approaches to REDD+ and the high diversity of countries that plan to participate, it is unclear if REDD+ will actually reduce carbon emissions from deforestation in a cost-effective way, which was the original goal of the policy. Additionally, is it realistic to hope that REDD+ can fundamentally change unsound forest management regimes that have dominated in tropical countries for much of the past 100 years? A final question surrounds the social impacts of REDD+ approaches: can REDD+ do more than just conserve carbon? Many organizations have asserted that REDD+ activities need to be combined with co-benefits, such as biodiversity conservation or sustainable development, and using REDD+ to tackle poverty among forest dwellers has been a commonly proposed approach (Luttrell et al. 2013; Tacconi et al. 2013). In other words, can REDD+ motivate more participatory, livelihood-positive benefits for marginalized forest peoples?

These are ambitious hopes, and I explore in this chapter how realistic they may be by looking at the development of REDD+ in one developing country that has long struggled to reconcile sustainable forest management with the needs of a growing and relatively poor population. By following how REDD+ readiness activities have unfolded in Vietnam over the past 5 years, I ask questions regarding the relative prioritization of non-carbon goals in Vietnam's REDD+ process. In this chapter, I assess three key topics that will need to be addressed with regard to how REDD+ can focus on the needs of forest-using communities. First, I look at whether participatory mechanisms for local involvement in forest management have been included in REDD+ priorities. Second, I examine how the question of livelihoods have been addressed by local policymakers, and how benefits might be used to improve local conditions, especially for the poorest. Finally, I examine how safeguards are being developed to potentially guard against abuses of rights for those participating in or affected by REDD+.

My initial conclusions from this assessment of Vietnam's situation is that existing mechanisms to address participation and livelihoods, as well as the requirement that there be safeguards in place, are currently insufficient to spark much-needed reforms in an intransigent state forest management system. While much global attention has focused on the potential of market mechanisms like REDD+ to endanger local livelihoods through exclusion from resources (e.g., Corbera 2012), such concern may be focused on the wrong elements of REDD+. Indeed, the so-called market aspects of REDD+ are in some ways a red herring, as it is likely that much REDD+ funding will continue to arrive in form of bilateral and multilateral development aid for the foreseeable future, as is the case currently for Vietnam. Yet even in this type of non-market funding situation, there is thus far insufficient attention to key concerns surrounding participation and livelihoods.

Methods

In this chapter I use fieldwork I have been conducting in Vietnam since 2008 on the emergence of REDD+, especially my participation in a number of stakeholder workshops and meetings on policy among both national and local actors, along with surveys of local households in one province where REDD+ readiness work has been piloted since 2010 (Lam Dong province in the south-central area of the country in an upland tropical forest area). I also look at how participation, livelihoods and safeguards have been incorporated in the development of the first two Provincial REDD Action Plans (PRAPs), whereby local provinces have taken on the work of determining how they are likely to implement REDD+ (Lam Dong province and Dien Bien province in the northwest of the country; see Figure 11.1). In the following sections of this chapter, I look at how questions surrounding participation, livelihoods and safeguards have been discussed in global REDD+ negotiations, and how these are being addressed in REDD+ readiness projects on the ground in Vietnam.

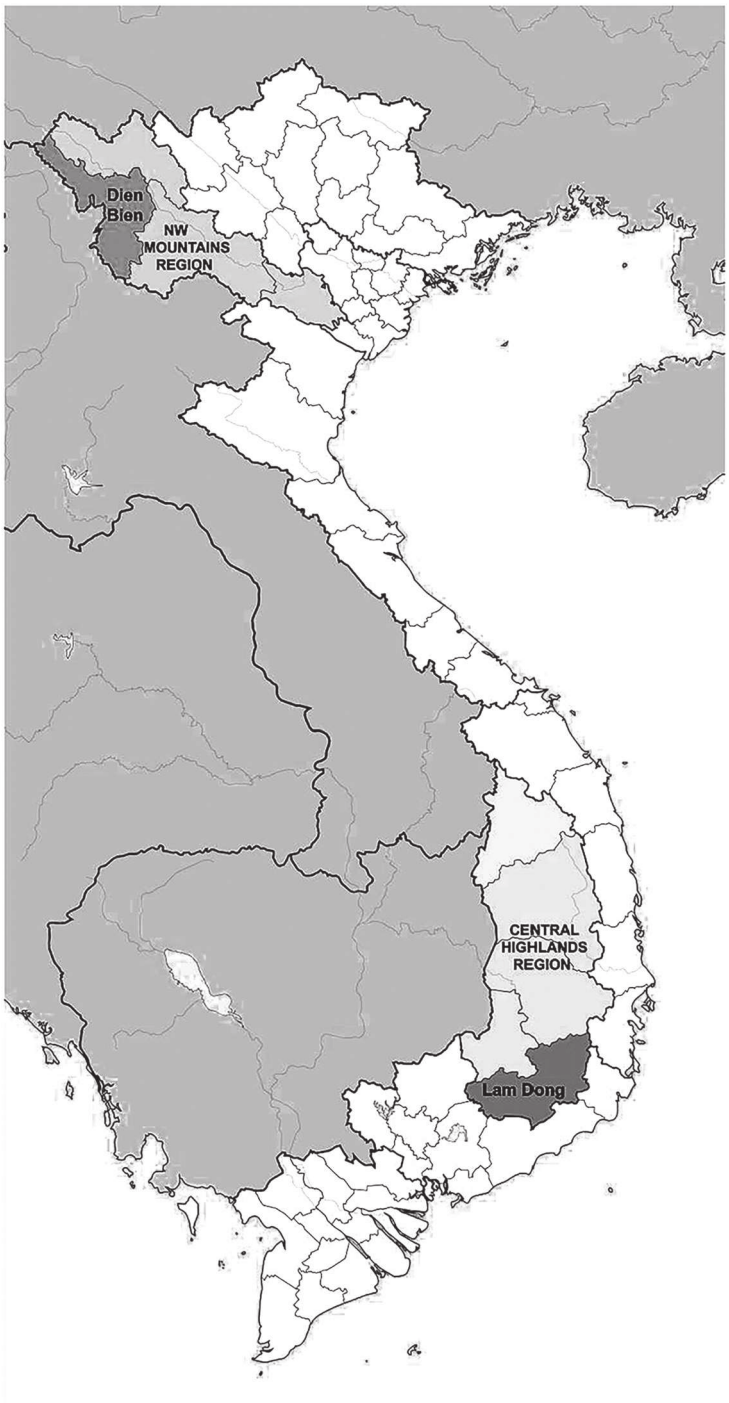

FIGURE 11.1 Map of Vietnam with provinces discussed in chapter highlighted.

Participation and Livelihoods in Global REDD Policies

Formal negotiations over REDD+ have been underway since the 2007 Bali meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP), where the concept was endorsed for the first time by the signatories of the Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (for a comprehensive review, see Corbera et al. 2010; Agrawal et al. 2011; Gupta et al. 2013). Following the Cancun COP in 2010, the working group on Long Term Cooperative Action agreed to support the development of REDD+ and encouraged countries to begin to contribute to future implementation by taking a number of steps (see Box 11.1). As the Cancun statement indicates, formulating REDD+ and other forest policies in a participatory way, or how REDD+ might facilitate positive impacts on the lives of the poorest forest dwellers, did not receive formal attention. Rather, the idea of safeguards was chosen as a stand-in for these larger questions of equity and benefits from REDD+.

BOX 11.1 THE CANCUN STATEMENT ON REDD

At the Cancun Meetings of the UNFCCC, countries were encouraged to begin to develop:

(a) A national strategy or action plan;
(b) A national forest reference emission level and/or forest reference level or, if appropriate, as an interim measure, subnational forest reference emission levels and/or forest reference levels, in accordance with national circumstances, and with provisions contained in decision 4/CP.15, and with any further elaboration of those provisions adopted by the Conference of the Parties;
(c) A robust and transparent national forest monitoring system for the monitoring and reporting of the activities referred to in paragraph 70 above, with, if appropriate, subnational monitoring and reporting as an interim measure, in accordance with national circumstances, and with the provisions contained in decision 4/CP.15, and with any further elaboration of those provisions agreed by the Conference of the Parties;
(d) A system for providing information on how the safeguards referred to in annex I to this decision are being addressed and respected throughout the implementation of the activities referred to in paragraph 70, while respecting sovereignty

(Paragraph 71, Cancun Agreements, http://cancun.unfccc.int)

In order to begin setting up local action plans, monitoring systems and safeguards, many bilateral and multilateral donors have been funding REDD+ readiness pilot projects since 2009. These include the World Bank's FCPF and the

UN's UN-REDD programs, as well as the Norwegian Development Agency, which has been a large supporter of bilateral REDD+ readiness actions, including pledges of $1 billion to Indonesia, $250 million to Guyana, and $30 million to Vietnam, among other countries. In addition, some voluntary carbon accounting projects involving the private sector have also begun to operate in anticipation of REDD+ financing in the future.

However, questions of good governance, particularly in the form of formal arrangements for participation in the development of REDD+ policies, have not been well addressed in most country readiness plans for REDD+, according to early analysis. Despite the fact that many donors, such as UN-REDD, have called for clear systems of information access and local participation (UN-REDD 2013), reports to date have indicated that participation has generally been weak in pilot activities, with many communities only consulted, rather than being involved in a systematic manner in all aspects of REDD+ planning (Hall 2012; Brown 2013). Procedural equity, in which affected communities are instrumental in the development of natural resources programs, has long been an elusive goal for many governments in the global South (McDermott et al. 2013). To date, there is no clear UNFCCC guidance on how local participation or equity should be fostered or promoted through REDD+, leaving this question to individual projects and county programs to tackle (Krause et al. 2013; White 2013; Sunderlin et al. 2014). As a result, many national-level REDD+ readiness projects have primarily proceeded in a top-down fashion, and have focused mostly on technical issues, such as carbon monitoring, paying little attention to structural changes that may be needed in forest sectors. A 2011 report noted that in a review of forest governance in Indonesia, Ghana, Mozambique, Tanzania and Vietnam, REDD proposals have been

> over-hasty, formulaic and barely credible plans that could do more harm than good . . . [in the form of] fast- developing national REDD strategies that focus on how to count and monitor carbon rather than how to bring about the major policy and capacity changes needed to be "ready" for REDD. All are based on the idea that with enough money over two to four years, a top-down, government-led process will improve governance and give forest-based practitioners what they need to guarantee emissions reductions and qualify for REDD payments.
>
> *(IIED 2011, p. 5)*

Livelihoods have similarly not been a major topic of discussion at UNFCCC meetings to hammer out REDD+ standards. Livelihoods have largely been equated with discussion of benefit sharing; that is, how to get money to people who undertake forest conserving activities (Lawlor et al. 2010; Luttrell et al. 2013). Many REDD+ proponents have rather simplistically assumed that, all other things being equal, a land use that provides the most money will be the one that the farmer chooses; thus REDD+ discussions have often focused on

quite basic models of forest area, carbon prices and opportunity costs (e.g., see Strassburg et al. 2009). But livelihoods are about more than income; they are about how individuals and households manage a portfolio of actions to support household welfare and achievements, including, though not entirely limited to, income stream management. To date, the experience of forest carbon projects on livelihood indicators is mixed; some carbon projects have increased smallholder incomes, diversified livelihoods and built capacity and skills, while other projects have had minimal or negative impacts (Boyd et al. 2007; Caplow et al. 2011; Reynolds 2012; Lawlor et al. 2013). Unfortunately, many REDD+ readiness projects have downplayed these challenges in favor of mostly technical discussions of setting carbon prices and covering opportunity costs of participation, assuming that livelihood gains will follow (Milne 2012).

Indeed, evidence to date indicates that rather than explicit attention to participation and livelihoods, most discussion on the social aspects of REDD+ at the global level have focused on how REDD+ projects will use safeguards to ensure participants' rights are protected and there are no adverse impacts on involved communities and households (Chhatre et al. 2012; Visseren-Hamakers et al. 2012). These safeguards include use of such actions as free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) in advance of REDD+ planning. The COP at Cancun in 2010 agreed to the principle of safeguards, although details were lacking; many COP participants found the final decision too weak, as it only requires from participating nations "a system for providing information" on how governments are addressing the problem of safeguards in REDD+. The Subsidiary Body on Scientific and Technical Advice (SBSTA) has been working through possible approaches for reporting on safeguards in the future, but guidance is still somewhat unclear. Consequently, different REDD+ projects have developed their own approaches to safeguards, including the UN-REDD's Principles & Criteria (P&C); the World Bank's FCPF Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA); and the Climate, Community and Biodiversity Alliance (CCBA) REDD+ Social & Environmental Standards (SES).[1]

Yet while these safeguard standards all refer to the idea that local communities must be involved in REDD+ development, experience on the ground suggests that many of the private carbon projects certified by CCBA, for example, failed to meet stated goals for participation and information access (Suiseeya and Caplow 2013). Further, the limited focus of many safeguards policies at the project level has primarily been on preventing abuses (a "do no harm" approach) rather than bottom-up suggestions on how to enhance local forest-based livelihoods as part of a multifaceted sustainable forest management strategy (a "do more good" approach) (McDermott et al. 2012; De La Fuente and Hajjar 2013). Given this lack of attention to participation and livelihoods as integral components of safeguards, it is not surprising that many countries like Vietnam, which are attempting to initiate REDD+ activities, have had problems prioritizing these issues, as I explore later.

Forest Management Challenges in Vietnam

Before reviewing how REDD+ projects are addressing participation and livelihoods in Vietnam, I provide a brief overview of how previous eras of forest management and policy have addressed these questions. Importantly, the state has long been the dominant actor in Vietnam's forest sector. Shortly after the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) was founded in 1954, forest policy was developed for the complete nationalization of the forest estate and the establishment of state-owned logging companies to manage these lands. The nationalization of forests was extended to the South after 1975, during reunification of Vietnam at the conclusion of the Vietnam War (McElwee 2016). In 1986, the ruling Communist Party began to liberalize the economy and move to more market-oriented planning. Land and forest laws were revised in the early 1990s, and at that time it was believed that issuing long-term lease rights for households to use forest land, rather than continued state management, would result in better protection of forests and expansion of tree planting. However, this decentralization was top-down, and local participation (with a few exceptions) was mostly limited to receiving poor-quality lands for reforestation. The state retained control over much of the best forest land, such as those in national parks and reserves, and the land allocation policies only ended up providing individual household rights to less than one-third of the total forest estate; various state organs (including the Ministry of Agriculture, state-owned logging companies, local provinces, the army and so forth) continue to control the rest (Nguyen 2006).

Ambitious forest plantation programs have expanded forest cover in recent years, although deforestation remains problematic in many protected reserves. Further, communities as legal entities control forest rights in only a small number of provinces, amounting to less than 1 percent of the total forest land area (Nguyen 2006). Finally, the benefits of forestry have been unevenly received, with many households receiving very little of their income from forest sources despite living in heavily forested areas (Thuan et al. 2006; McElwee 2010). Conflicts between forest-using communities and state forest managers continue on an almost daily basis in many areas of Vietnam (To et al. 2013).

Development of REDD Policy in Vietnam

A national REDD+ steering committee was established in Vietnam in early 2011, facilitated by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development; a special REDD+ office, which will coordinate with the UNFCCC, was established within the Vietnam Administration of Forestry. A National REDD+ Network was set up in 2009 for NGOs and donors to offer advice to the REDD+ readiness process. This REDD+ Network has several subcommittees that have been tackling issues such as governance; monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV); financing and benefit distribution systems (BDS); and local implementation

(Pham et al. 2012). The government of Vietnam approved a National REDD+ Action Plan for 2011–2020 in summer of 2012, which encourages the development of provincial action plans, pilot projects and legal frameworks, stating that the National REDD+ Program

> will contribute to reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD), to promoting forest conservation, sustainable forest management and the enhancement of carbon stocks, jointly comprising REDD+, and at the same time improving the livelihoods of the rural population in Vietnam.
>
> *(Hang et al. 2011, p. 12)*

At least 17 different donor-funded pilots are underway in assorted provinces to publicize REDD+, conduct carbon baseline measurement, and perform other activities. By far the largest donor to the readiness process has been Norway, which has pledged nearly $35 million total in two phases to the Vietnam UN-REDD program; development agencies of the United States, Japan, Germany and Finland are the other major bilateral donors.

Can these new REDD+ projects tackle some of the past barriers to successful forest conservation in Vietnam? To answer this question, I examine how REDD+ projects are being developed by different actors, and how these projects have dealt with key issues of participation, livelihoods and safeguards.

Participation: Can REDD+ Increase Local Involvement in Forest Decision-Making?

Forest management in Vietnam has long been dominated by the state. Government forest offices retain great control over both a significant land area that is directly state managed, as well as the right to be involved in private forest land management, such as through taxing and regulating the sale of forest produce. Much of the local forest sector in Vietnam still operates on what is known as a *xin-cho* model, which means "ask-give," and which is a legacy of the long socialist era. Local people and subnational governments ask for resources, which the central state grants (or not), but local initiative is highly stymied by these norms of waiting for central government approval. Increasing the initiative and participation of local actors has been a goal of donor projects in the forestry sector for nearly 20 years, with mixed results (Wode and Huy 2009). Despite a strong push in the 1990s for attention to community forestry, for example, it still remains the case that less than 1 percent of the forest area is managed by communities with firm land use rights. (This also means that communities are also unlikely to be able to receive carbon payments collectively, at least for the foreseeable future, due to these legal constraints [UN-REDD Vietnam and MARD 2010].) This is in contrast to relatively strong communal and indigenous tenure rights in much of Latin America, for example.

REDD+ projects in Vietnam thus operate in a climate of uncertain responsibilities and roles for local communities. Outside of direct project stakeholders, there is little awareness of REDD+ among local peoples and the general public (Pham et al. 2012), and civil society actors are relatively weak and have little voice in REDD+ debates, where the state plays the leading role (Di Gregorio et al. 2013). The development of local policies and PRAPs in two provinces so far have demonstrated that most activities surrounding REDD+ are considered to be the responsibility of provincial forest departments, who only rarely engage with demands of local households or communities. In the development of the Dien Bien province PRAP, for example, authorities asserted that they had held some meetings with local communities during the development of the policy, but it was not clear how this participation influenced the outcomes of the process, or if these meetings were simply a way to pass information downward. Furthermore, the final decision on which communes (the lowest level of state administration) would receive REDD+ support and funding will be made by the province on the basis of areas with high forest extent, high deforestation rates and the potential for afforestation, not on local willingness or enthusiasm to undertake REDD+ activities (Dien Bien Forest Department, personal communication, 2014).

The primary mode by which local participation is being integrated into REDD+ activities in Vietnam is through implementation of FPIC agreements, which have been introduced by the UN-REDD project. UN-REDD has praised Vietnam as the first country to successfully implement FPIC for REDD+ (UN-REDD 2014). Yet questions remain about how transparent and fair such FPIC consultations have really been, and if they truly count as full participation. The concept is of FPIC is very hard to understand in Vietnamese and primarily has been translated as a type of community consultation, rather than bottom-up participation. For example, in pilot trials of FPIC in Lam Dong province, village level meetings held by the UN-REDD project to get consent for REDD+ activities have been held but were very short (only two hours), and only 45 minutes were allocated for questions and answers after awareness-raising activities (mostly centered on what climate change was, and how forests affect climate, with frequent use of the metaphor that forests are like the lungs of the earth—see Figure 11.2) before the villagers had to make the decision whether to consent to REDD+ (Nguyen et al. 2010). Communities were not presented with any information on the possible risks and costs of participation (such as changes in agricultural practices that they might have to made in response to REDD+) that might have allowed them a fuller range of consent options. Rather, villagers in group meetings were asked general questions like "Do you want your forests to be conserved?" (Lam Dong Forest Department, personal communication, 2014). Not surprisingly, this was supported by most people, since the question did not refer to any costs that might be incurred in forest conservation or how it might be carried out.

There was also little variation between communities in the options presented for participation in an FPIC process: votes were held collectively (usually with a

FIGURE 11.2 Poster explaining "Trees Are the Lungs of the Earth" outside a forest ranger station in Lam Dong Province, Vietnam.

non-anonymous show of hands) to say yes or no to REDD+. But there were few other possibilities for communities to propose local inputs into the REDD+ activity development process (UN-REDD consultant, personal communication, 2013).

Livelihoods: Can REDD+ Increase Household Incomes and Diversify Livelihoods from Forests?

Donors in Vietnam have emphasized the linkages between poverty alleviation and forestry that might be addressed by REDD+. Yet current REDD+ readiness activities have paid insufficient attention to how REDD+ could be used to fund specific poverty activities. For example, the national REDD Action Plan proposes a general attention to "forest-based livelihoods" but offers no practical ideas or suggestions of what types of livelihoods might be encouraged and how financing would be used (Hang et al. 2011).

Two major structural issues stand out as particular livelihood challenges for REDD+. The first is the channeling of REDD+ money and attention through provincial forest departments. These have never had a history of success in attending to local livelihoods, as they are dominated by professional foresters with little training or interest in economic, sociological or anthropological approaches to natural resources. As provinces develop their local action plans for

REDD+ (PRAPs), the forest departments that are managing this process have devoted little attention to questions of poverty and livelihoods. One of the least elaborated aspects of the two existing PRAPs are the sections discussing how lost livelihoods might be compensated for if REDD+ implementation requires changes in forest use. Little livelihood data is presented in either document, in contrast to fairly detailed data on forest carbon content.

The second challenge is that REDD+ activities on the ground are so far primarily targeting ethnic minority households, presumed to practice shifting (or swidden) cultivation and to be agents of deforestation, to the exclusion of other drivers of deforestation, such as state logging and state-driven coffee and rubber expansion. The two existing PRAPs primarily discuss the impact of local ethnic minority households on forest resources. Yet significant non-local, non-ethnic minority drivers of deforestation, namely the conversion of forests for rubber plantations in Dien Bien and for greenhouse export-oriented agriculture in Lam Dong, are not addressed in either province's PRAP. This attention to the poorest households as responsible for forest loss, while wealthier and more connected individuals and companies are not examined, is potentially worrisome.

In terms of national policy in Vietnam, livelihoods in the context of REDD+ have mostly been addressed through discussion of a benefit distribution system (BDS) (UN-REDD Vietnam and MARD 2010; Sikor et al. 2012). So far, indications are that a national REDD+ fund will be set up, which would disburse finances downward to provincial funds, which would then decide how to distribute to local beneficiaries. How to ensure conditionality (that is, that payees only get the money if the forest protection is delivered) remains problematic in national discussions. Trial consultations in local provinces on benefit distributions systems also reveal wide disparities between groups as to how benefits might be shared, such as if they should be in cash or in kind (Sikor et al. 2012). To date, no payments have yet occurred in any major REDD+ readiness pilot in Vietnam. This has been a source of disappointment in local areas, especially in Lam Dong province, where such pilots are now nearly five years old. As one provincial official said in an interview,

> Phase one of REDD has had a lot of talk, but not much action . . . REDD we've discussed for five years and there is no money. We've promised people we will give them money in the future but it's not clear that we will be able to do so. And that is very dangerous.
>
> *(Lam Dong official, personal communication, 2014)*

Will REDD Safeguards Be Sufficient?

Like other countries, Vietnam has been discussing setting up a legal safeguards system (known in Vietnamese as *đảm bảo an toàn*) for REDD+, and it is clear that the minimal decisions on safeguards that were passed at the Cancun COP

are now affecting country implementation. In a recent draft report, a proposed national safeguards roadmap for Vietnam is quite legalistic and does not move far from the basic Cancun safeguards framework. Local provinces are likely to follow the lead of national authorities on this: officials in Dien Bien province told me that safeguards should be established nationally, and thus these were not included in consideration of their local PRAP.

Currently, the draft national safeguards roadmap refers primarily to ensuring a consistent legal environment and assuring information access on REDD+, but proposes little else to improve participation, equity or development as a required goal or outcome of REDD+ projects (SNV and VNFOREST 2013). For example, the roadmap suggests matching REDD+ safeguards to other requirements under commitments such as the Convention on Biological Diversity, but the reporting obligations for these other conventions are quite weak and have few formal requirements. In interviews with policy-oriented non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Vietnam, activists expressed concern that existing international reporting requirements for conventions are minimal, and that the reports issued are usually short and written by consultants for the sake of meeting requirements, rather than to effect policy or implementation on the ground. These NGOs are concerned that REDD+ safeguards reporting to the UNFCCC will similarly be formulaic. They fear that reporting will include neither serious consideration of how to protect vulnerable peoples from abuse in REDD+ projects, nor holistic consideration of how to use REDD+ to promote more equitable livelihoods in development (Vietnam NGO, personal communication, 2014).

How might a more active level of engagement with reporting and safeguards be achieved? The safeguards roadmap refers to the need to provide access to information for REDD+, but according to one NGO activist interviewed, this is a weak safeguard unless people know how to make use of public information. For example, some countries use public advocates who help people navigate access to public information.

Further, it is not clear what mechanisms will be in place to enforce statutory rights in REDD+, for instance through grievance mechanisms. Vietnam does not have a tradition of using citizen lawsuits to enforce existing environmental laws, as is the case in other countries. One NGO worker suggested that REDD+ would be much strengthened if it included the ability to sue government forestry departments if safeguard regulations are not followed. Such a mechanism has not traditionally been available in Vietnam, and should it be implemented for REDD+, the activist stated it could have a positive effect on other areas, such as pollution law enforcement.

Conclusions: Making REDD+ Participatory and Pro-poor

To what degree will REDD+ be able to make good on the many high hopes that have been placed on it? The potential signs that REDD+ is proceeding with insufficient attention to participation and livelihoods, and with weak and

unenforceable safeguards, should be worrying news. In places where REDD+ and carbon valuation are driven by top-down processes, whether by donors or states, the outcomes are likely to be less satisfactory than in places with bottom-up and genuine participation (Schroeder and McDermott 2014). Angelsen (2013) expresses pessimism that donor-led funding can lead to substantial policy reform, without lower-level buy-in, and REDD+ is likely to be no exception. Disappointments on both global and local scales may be common outcomes. As one local official in Lam Dong said to me, getting involved in REDD+ is like "grabbing for the sky," in that it seems a far off and impossible task to meet both international obligations and local expectations (Lam Dong Forest Department, personal communication, 2014).

For Vietnam, it is not yet clear how REDD+ can be a positive driver for change in the forest sector. Overall, in the discussions about REDD+, and in the development of local policies and pilots to date, very little attention has been paid to the poverty and social aspects of REDD+ implementation. Despite lip service from donors in documents for REDD+ readiness, the actual development of provincial REDD action plans has paid little formal attention to issues of participation, livelihoods or safeguards. Nor has attention been given to the risks that might be incurred if poor people are induced to make land use changes in response to carbon markets that restrict their production of food, or if new forms of exchange and marketization are introduced to areas unfamiliar with them. There has been far more attention paid to more technical issues, such as establishing baseline levels of carbon emissions, than to long-term social monitoring of the household-level effects of REDD+ payments and land use changes.

The lack of strong support from the UNFCCC from the earliest stages for a unified safeguards approach is potentially burdensome for national and subnational levels that are seeking guidance, and the minimal devotion to key social concerns in the Cancun and Warsaw frameworks has meant that these issues are treated fairly simplistically at country levels. For example, in Vietnam, the idea of participation, which encompasses a potentially large range of possible actions, is primarily reduced to the idea of doing a FPIC consultation. Sustainable livelihoods approaches, which might reveal a range of possible activities, are primarily reduced to the idea of having a formal BDS. Are FPIC and BDS likely to truly empower citizens to play more engaged roles in forest management? So far, at least in Vietnam, the indication is that FPIC is inadequate and participation is too rote, while livelihood indicators for BDS systems are weak and monitoring of livelihoods is challenging.

Even the establishment of legal safeguards may not be sufficient to overcome these challenges. Additional initiatives are also potentially needed, such as the creation of baselines to understand livelihood changes, and of reporting mechanisms to track changes in health or education among REDD+ participating

communities. Overall, the jury is still out on how REDD+ will be able to be a tool for the betterment of local forest-using communities, but continued attention to the issues of participation, livelihoods and safeguards is surely needed.

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Note

1. More details on these guidelines can be found at UNREDD- http://www.un-redd.org/Multiple_Benefits_SEPC/tabid/54130/Default.aspx; Forest Carbon Partnership Fund- http://www.forestcarbonpartnership.org/sites/forestcarbonpartnership.org/files/Documents/PDF/Nov2011/FCPF%20Readiness%20Fund%20Common%20Approach%20_Final_%2010-Aug-2011_Revised.pdf;andCCBA—http://www.climate-standards.org/ccb-standards/.

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