

REDD+ and Women's Rights

Reducing **E**missions from **D**eforestation and Forest **D**egradation (REDD+) is an international initiative to fight climate change by protecting, sustainably managing, and regenerating forests. REDD+ was established through negotiations of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) as a way to generate funding to keep forests standing and sequestering carbon. REDD+ implementation includes both reviewing policies and laws that drive deforestation and directly paying forest owners to create incentives for them to protect or regenerate forests.

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation (MONREC) is leading the government initiative to develop a REDD+ national strategy that is suited to the current national context and in line with international commitments. National safeguards are also being developed as part of this process, including to recognize customary tenure and to ensure the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples and women in all stages of REDD+.

The Paris Agreement states that when taking action to address climate change, including REDD+, all parties should “**respect, promote and consider** their respective obligations on human rights, the right to health, **the rights of indigenous peoples**, local communities, migrants, children, persons with disabilities and people in vulnerable situations and the right to development, as well as **gender equality, empowerment of women** and intergenerational equity”.

The Paris Agreements and COP16, which includes agreements on REDD+ and safeguards, recognize that REDD+ should be gender-responsive, women should have access to capacity building, and there should be full and effective participation of local communities which includes women. By recognizing CEDAW and UNDRIP, the safeguards also include the right of indigenous peoples to their land, FPIC, the right of women to participate

in policy development and rural development planning, and equal rights to property between married spouses. The UN-REDD+ program technical guidance on implementing REDD+ suggests that REDD+ should not just safeguard against negative impacts but actively work to for women’s empowerment and to strengthen women’s rights.

UNFCCC REDD+ Safeguards

In order to address the potential risks of REDD+, seven safeguards were included in the Cancun Agreement at the 16th Conference of Parties (COP16) held 2010. As a party to the UNFCCC, Myanmar is responsible for promoting and supporting these safeguards as it prepares for and implements REDD+.

Myanmar is also directed to establish a national safeguard information system (SIS) to track how it is addressing safeguards in policies, laws, and regulations, and how the safeguards are being respected and implemented in practice.

The safeguards are non-binding guidance to countries developing REDD+ national strategies, but donors and funding mechanisms may hesitate to support REDD+ in countries that are not promoting safeguards. REDD+ safeguards are also essential for developing a

successful national program, especially for a country like Myanmar with a history of conflict and significant land and forest tenure insecurity. Without safeguards, REDD+ implementation may cause loss of biodiversity, the destruction of natural forests in favor of plantations, land speculation, poverty, landlessness, food insecurity, and other serious negative impacts.

When countries are implementing REDD+, the following safeguards should be followed:

(a) That actions complement or are consistent with the objectives of national forest programmers and relevant international conventions and agreements

REDD+ should follow international agreements, and the most relevant for women's rights are:

United National Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), 2007
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), 1979

Signatories are committed to taking steps to eliminate discrimination against women and ensure that:

- Women have an equal right to participate in the formulation of government policy (Article 7)
- Rural women participate in the elaboration and implementation of development planning at all levels (Article 14)
- Rural women participate in and benefit equally from rural development, obtain all types of training and education, and have access to appropriate technology (Article 14)
- Rural women have equal treatment in land and agrarian reform as well as in resettlement schemes (Article 14)
- The same rights for both spouses in respect to ownership, ownership, acquisition, management, administration, enjoyment and disposition of property (Article 16)

(b) Transparent and effective national forest governance structures, taking into account national legislation and sovereignty;

REDD+ should improve the management of the forestry sector and other sectors that drive deforestation. Since REDD+ is making forests more valuable by making carbon worth money, it risks increasing corruption and promoting land grabs to claim carbon rights. The REDD+ program must be managed to reduce these risks.

(c) Respect for the knowledge and rights of indigenous peoples and members of local communities, by taking into account relevant international obligations, national circumstances and laws, and noting that the United Nations General Assembly has adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;

This includes the recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples to their lands and territories and to Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) over projects that will impact their lands.

(d) The full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders, in particular indigenous peoples and local communities;

Women should be included in all steps of REDD+ from planning, to implementation, to monitoring and evaluation.

(e) Actions are consistent with the conservation of natural forests and biological diversity, ensuring that actions...are not used for the conversion of natural forests, but are instead used to incentivize the protection and conservation of natural forests and their ecosystem services, and to enhance other social and environmental benefits;

Plantations, for example, should not

replace natural forests under a REDD+ project, and forests should not be planted on a grassland that is important for biodiversity.

UNFCCC REDD+ Safeguards

(f) Actions to address the risks of reversals

This refers to the need to ensure that forests are maintained over the long term, instead of being cut down after REDD+ payments are made. This safeguard implies the need for clear tenure arrangements, especially so that communities can benefit from REDD+.

(g) Actions to reduce displacement of emissions

If deforestation decreases at REDD+ pilot sites, but increases in other areas, there is no overall reduction in deforestation. Moving an agribusiness or timber concession from one forest to another forest is not a successful REDD+ project.

Myanmar is in the process of developing a national REDD+ strategy. The Forest Department and the REDD+ Core Unit, working with ITTO, has developed Social and Environmental Safeguards for Myanmar's REDD+ Programme. With support from the UN-REDD Program, a roadmap and action plan are currently being developed on how to recognize and respect safeguards in Myanmar.

The national safeguards affirm the need for the full and effective participation of women and indigenous peoples in the design, implementation, and evaluation of the REDD+ program. The program should target women specifically to ensure that women's priorities and perspectives are incorporated into REDD+ and that they benefit from REDD+ fairly and on their own terms.

Principle 1: The REDD+ program recognizes and respects rights to lands, territories and resources.

In order to fulfill this principle, Myanmar's REDD+ program, policies, and land use plans must recognize and respect both land titles and the customary tenure rights of indigenous people and local communities over land, forests, and other resources. This includes a range of tenure rights, including access, management, and use, and both individual and collective rights. Identifying who has rights to which resources must be a participatory process that includes women and vulnerable groups.

The REDD+ program also requires the FPIC of indigenous peoples and local communities for any activities affecting their rights to land and resources. FPIC applies to both the design and implementation of the REDD+ program (1.3). Communities must define a process for FPIC that takes the views of all members into account, including women and marginalized groups.

When REDD+ includes payments for carbon sequestration, the ownership of carbon rights must be based on formal land titles and customary tenure rights to land and resources (1.4). This is necessary to prevent land grabs motivated to claim carbon rights.

Principle 2: The benefits of the REDD+ program are shared equitably among all relevant rights holders and stakeholders.

The REDD+ program must give special attention to women and marginalized groups during program and project design when assessing benefits, costs, and risks. Guidelines for equitable benefit sharing should ensure that women and marginalized groups also benefit from REDD+. Benefits must be shared equitably and stakeholders must help to determine how benefits will be distributed, what kind of benefits they will receive, and how they will be delivered. For example, benefits may be delivered to a community fund with guidelines on how they will be used for the benefit of all community members.

Principle 3: The REDD+ program improves long-term livelihood security and well-being of Indigenous Peoples (ethnic groups) and local communities with special attention to the most marginalized and/or vulnerable people.

REDD+ should be designed with special attention to women, indigenous people, and vulnerable groups to ensure that the program improves their lives and does not further marginalize them.

Principle 4: The REDD+ program contributes to good governance and sustainable development

The REDD+ program must be managed transparently, with information available to the public and effective oversight and audits. The REDD+ program should establish targets that aim to improve the governance of forests and other sectors that drive deforestation (4.5).

Principle 5: The REDD+ program maintains and enhances biodiversity and ecosystem services.

The REDD+ program must protect biodiversity and the environment, consistent with international safeguard (e) in the Cancun Agreement and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Principle 6: All relevant stakeholders participate fully and effectively in the REDD+ program

The REDD+ program must include the full and effective participation of all interested stakeholders, including indigenous peoples, local communities, women, and marginalized groups. These groups must participate in the design, implementation, and evaluation of the REDD+ program, and must be able to select their own representatives to attend program meetings and consultations (6.2).

The REDD+ program must respect customary management and decision-making processes used by indigenous peoples and local communities and these systems should not be undermined by REDD+. Traditional knowledge, skills, and management systems must be incorporated into all stages of the REDD+ program. FPIC must be received for REDD+ to use traditional knowledge (6.3).

The program must also ensure that stakeholders have the knowledge and ability to effectively participate in REDD+ (6.5). Women, indigenous peoples, local communities, and marginalized people may need specific efforts and training to fully participate in REDD+. Stakeholder representatives must be able to share information and coordinate inputs for the people they are representing (6.6). A grievance mechanism must be established for REDD+ (6.4).

Principle 7: The REDD+ program complies with applicable local and national laws and international treaties, conventions and statement regulations

When local or national laws are not consistent with international treaties and conventions, a process must be established to address any gaps and inconsistencies between them. As in the international safeguards, the most relevant for women’s rights are UNDRIP and CEDAW.



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