

Equity in climate change and REDD+

A handbook for grassroots facilitators

Questions and answers



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Purpose of this publication

This handbook is the result of collaboration between two regional RECOFTC projects – Grassroots Capacity Building for REDD+ in Asia (REDD+ Grassroots Project) and Grassroots Equity and Enhanced Networks in the Mekong Region (GREEN Mekong Program). The objective of this question and answer handbook is to support grassroots facilitators who are engaged in delivering training programs on promoting social equity in climate change mitigation, specifically in Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+¹). It is also a quick reference material for key stakeholders at provincial or district levels, particularly forestry officials, who are engaged in local and regional level learning processes for promoting equity in the development of climate change mitigation measures, and related forest management practices.

Although several, more complex, publications on the approach of REDD+ are available and, more recently, material on REDD+ related equity issues have been published, the fact remains that grassroots stakeholders have limited access to concise and easy-to-read material on equity in REDD+. As a consequence, it remains a challenge for grassroots stakeholders to comprehend and use relevant information to promote equity at the local level. Moreover, the concept of social equity is complex, even abstract to some extent; simpler explanations that can be easily understood and articulated at the local level are necessary. Low capacity of grassroots stakeholders, including local civil society and non-government organizations (CSOs and NGOs), impedes them from effectively articulating their aspirations and perspectives to policy-makers, leaving them vulnerable to manipulation by vested interest groups. This question and answer (Q&A) handbook therefore aims to provide simple explanations on some of the key aspects of social equity in the context of forests, climate change and REDD+.

¹ REDD+ goes beyond deforestation and forest degradation, and includes the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks.

Structure of the handbook

The handbook consists of a series of ten questions and answers. The questions are aligned to the primary objective of addressing the capacity development needs of grassroots facilitators; they address some very basic questions about social equity in forest and climate change contexts, and at the same time encourage grassroots stakeholders to improve equity, participation and social inclusion with regard to climate change impacts and REDD+. The questions are arranged as follows:

Section 1 – The Basics section explains the concept of social equity, its dimensions and how it differs from equality, in the context of forests, climate change and REDD+.

Section 2 – Equity in the context of forests, climate change and REDD+ section focuses on the evolution of equity in the forestry sector in general, and the rationale and key reasons for promoting equity in forests, climate change and REDD+.

Section 3 – Policy instruments and related challenges section explains relevant international policy instruments to promote equity in climate change and REDD+, and associated challenges at the grassroots level.

Section 4 – Capacity development for improving equity section focuses on the needs and key considerations for capacity development at the grassroots level to improve and enhance equity. This section also discusses the key criteria and indicators for monitoring the integration and effectiveness of the fundamental principles and values of equity in climate change and REDD+; furthermore, it highlights how the two regional projects – the REDD+ Grassroots Project and the GREEN Mekong Program – are contributing towards promoting equity in the context of forests and climate change.

Ten key questions



Section 1: Basic understanding of equity

Q1 What is equity and how is it different from equality?

Q2 What are the key dimensions of equity?

Section 2: Equity in the context of forests, climate change and REDD+

Q3 What is the fundamental rationale for improving equity in forest-based climate change mitigation?

Q4 What are the key equity issues in forest-based climate change mitigation?

Q5 How does lack of equity increase the vulnerability of grassroots stakeholders to forest-based climate change mitigation?



Section 3: Policy instruments and related challenges to promoting equity in forest-based climate change mitigation at grassroots level

Q6 Which policy instruments and frameworks exist at the international level to promote equity in forests, climate change and REDD+?

Q7 What are the key challenges to ensuring equity in forest-based climate change mitigation at grassroots level?

Section 4: Capacity development for improving equity at grassroots level

Q8 What is the role of grassroots facilitators in improving equity in climate change and REDD+?

Q9 What are the key criteria and indicators for monitoring equity in forests, climate change and REDD+?

Q10 What is the role of RECOFTC in improving equity in forest-based climate change mitigation?



Section 1: Basic understanding of equity

Q1

What is equity and how is it different from equality?

Equity is about making sure that everyone has the opportunities, rights and resources to fulfill their aspirations. It is based on the idea that people's lives should be determined by their decisions, not by unfair conditions that they have no control over. Equity is also about the distribution of limited resources in a manner that ensures that each person receives a 'fair share' of the resource, which is possible if the process of distribution is impartial and just.

Thus, equity can be defined as *fairness of treatment for all concerned stakeholders during procedures to form and implement policies, and in the distribution of resources and costs associated with these policies, according to agreed sets of principles.*

Equity is linked to the principle of equality – that all people have an equal right to life. Equity is often confused or used interchangeably with equality, but they are not the same. Equality means that all people should be treated as equals, regardless of their context, status and position. However, treating people equally may not necessarily lead to a fair and just outcome. Equality can only work if people have the same context and the same needs. Equity understands that not everyone has the same starting position and some people may be unfairly disadvantaged by factors beyond their control.

The goal of equity is to remove avoidable and unfair circumstances that prevent people from reaching their full potential. An equity approach can help identify the reasons for unfair differences in people's situations and making changes to address them.

Inequity is usually caused by discrimination against certain groups within society; the discrimination can be based on gender, ethnicity, religion or disability. Any form of discrimination leads to the exclusion of individuals and groups from exercising their rights freely, such as depriving the access to resources that are accessible to others. People can also face inequity because of structural poverty, living in isolated areas, lack of access to services or information, environmental degradation and natural disasters. Inequity can occur at different levels, from between countries to within a community.

Q2

What are the key dimensions of equity?

Equity has three key dimensions – distributive, procedural and contextual, as explained below:

Distributive equity relates to fairness in the distribution or allocation of costs, contributions, risks and benefits among stakeholders, as a result of policy or resource management decisions. Distributive equity primarily (but not exclusively) represents the economic dimensions of equity.

Procedural equity refers to fairness in the political processes that facilitate decision-making, allocation of resources and dispute resolution. It involves representation, recognition/inclusion, voice and participation in processes. Procedural equity also refers to procedures being applied evenly - i.e., no corruption, favoritism, nepotism etc.

Contextual equity links the other two dimensions of equity by taking into account the pre-existing political, economic and social conditions under which people engage in procedures and distributions – and which limit or enable their capacity to do both. Contextual equity incorporates the concepts of individual capabilities (such as education, political recognition), access (to natural resources as well as to capital, labour, market networks, etc.) and power (to gain and maintain access to resources).

The three dimensions of equity are interlinked, and therefore the absence of any one dimension in promoting equity will not yield the desired results. For example, different capabilities, access and power can have a significant influence on procedural and distributive equity. Similarly, a Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) regime will not effectively allow communities to defend and pursue their interest in a situation where they lack the information, time and experience to participate effectively.



Section 2: Equity in the context of forests, climate change and REDD+

Q3

What is the fundamental rationale for improving equity in forest-based climate change mitigation?

Equity is not a new concept in the development discourse, including in the forestry sector. The debate on why and how to improve equity in forestry has evolved systematically over time. Starting with the recognition of various models of participatory forest management (such as community-based forest management, community forestry management, joint forest management, collaborative forest management, participatory forest management, village forestry and so forth), the initial focus of equity in forestry largely remained limited to fairness and social justice in benefit sharing (distributive equity). However, with the emergence of rights-based advocacy, the debate on equity in forestry has graduated to the next level. The focus is now on developing the individual and community's capacity and empowerment, in order to improve their participation in decision-making processes (procedural equity) and enhance the access to resources and power to maintain them (contextual equity).

Thus, the fundamental rationale for improving equity in forestry is to ensure a fair share of responsibilities, costs and benefits for everyone dependent on and involved in managing forests; this will deliver a sustained supply of resources and services, and thus a more secure livelihood. However, this is achievable only if all three dimensions of equity are applied in an interconnected manner in forest management. The absence of any one dimension will result in failure to provide the minimum level of income that guarantees livelihood security. Moreover, disparity among key stakeholders, to access or control forest resource management and use, significantly influences procedural and distributive equity, which consequently leads to inequity. This can be reduced or prevented by explicitly targeting the poor and marginalized communities (contextual equity) and helping them to increase their share of benefits (distributive equity) by gaining entry into decision-making space (procedural equity), as presented in the case study from Nepal (see box 1).

Box 1: Distributive, procedural and contextual equity in community forestry

Community forestry in Nepal demonstrates the interaction between distributive, procedural and contextual dimensions of equity.

When community forestry (CF) began in the 1970s the primary objective of promoting CF was to improve forest conditions. This was put into practice by enforcing restrictions on harvesting forest products by community forest user groups (CFUGs), in order to promote regeneration. However, the restrictions on forest product harvesting resulted in a decline in forest-based incomes and it is those that were most dependent or relied the most on collecting forest products that were affected the most, because they either had few or no private forest to fall back on. Soon enough, the distribution of costs and the eventual benefits (forest products and revenues) became an increasingly important issue, and improving livelihoods became an additional goal of CF, apart from improving forest conditions. By 2009, the CF guidelines directed that CFUGs must spend 35 percent of their revenue on pro-poor activities, which was an explicit recognition of a pro-equity agenda. In many cases the 'rules' were applied 'equally' but because some couldn't fulfill the requirements or didn't have a direct need, or time to collect, etc. they did not benefit equitably. Poorer families, for example, often had no access and means to harvest, transport or utilize their share of timber. To deal with this contextual inequity some CFUGs started selling timber as a community and distributed the income among the members, while others changed their management plans to deliver goods needed by the poor such as fuelwood and non-wood forest products (NWFPs).

Another example of contextual inequity was that households in extreme poverty were sometimes unable to make use of community-level benefits such as schools due to their inability to pay for school fees and uniforms. As a result some CFUGs changed their distributive practices to provide scholarships and uniforms to the children of these households.

Subsequently, many donor projects focused on how to achieve better distributive equity, reduce contextual inequity and improve the procedural equity in CFUGs. This began with a requirement that women and the largely marginalized social group – the dalit ('untouchable') caste – should be represented on CFUG committees and must occupy at least some of the key decision-making positions in the committee. Additionally, a strong focus on good governance (including identifying poor and marginalized community members, including women, through well-being ranking, and public audit) gradually led to a decision-making process that responded more directly to the needs of marginalized groups.

Adapted from: McDermott M.H. and Schreckenber K., 2009. Equity in community forestry: insights from North and South. International Forestry Review, 11(2), pp. 157-170.

Q4

What are the key equity issues in forest-based climate change mitigation?

In general, the fundamental principles and values of improving equity in the forestry sector are equally relevant and applicable to REDD+ as well. All three key dimensions of equity are important for a successful REDD+ program, as highlighted in the Cancun Agreement.² The Agreement emphasizes that equity is essential for ensuring both the legitimacy and the effectiveness of REDD+, in terms of distribution of costs and benefits, equal participation in decision-making and access to carbon and non-carbon benefits (Chhatre et al., 2012³; McDermott et al., 2012⁴).

The current debate on equity in REDD+ has largely focused on international equity, as opposed to national or local equity. International equity in the REDD+ discourse focuses on the responsibility of developed (industrialized) countries for carbon emissions and their obligations to provide financial support to help developing (and forested) countries to achieve emission reductions. However, as awareness and understanding about REDD+ is growing, the issues related to equity in REDD+ are being discussed at various levels (see box 2).

With regard to the issues of equity in REDD+ at the grassroots level, they are not very different and largely originate from existing equity issues in forestry. Unclear status of forest land tenure; weak governance structure at the local level; elite capture over access and control of forest resources; and exclusion of marginal groups including women and ethnic groups from decision-making processes; these are some of the issues that determine the ownership and distribution of carbon and non-carbon benefits from REDD+. Moreover, the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, which are varied, context specific and generally lie outside the forestry sector,

² Achieved at the United Nations Climate Change Conference held in Cancun, Mexico from 29 November to 10 December 2010.

³ Chhatre, A., Lakhanpal, S., Larson, A. M., Nelson, F., Ojha, H. and Rao, J., 2012. Social safeguards and co-benefits in REDD+: a review of the adjacent possible. *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability* 4, pp. 654-660. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.cosust.2012.08.006>

⁴ McDermott, C.L., Coad, L., Helfgott, A., and Schroeder, H., 2012. Operationalizing social safeguards in REDD+: actors, interests and ideas. *Environmental Science & Policy* 21, pp. 63-72. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.envsci.2012.02.007>



may also add to equity issues in REDD+. As the debate on REDD+ is unfolding, it is developing into a multi-level, multi-purpose and multi-stakeholder mechanism that is adding new issues pertaining to decision-making and contested interests and claims, which will have a direct bearing on equity issues.

Box 2: Global discourse on equity in REDD+

In a comparative study on policy discourses on equity issues related to REDD+ in the media, Di Gregorio et al. (2013) observed that national stakeholders in Indonesia and Brazil discussed the possibility of sharing the burden of emissions reduction and REDD+ financing responsibilities (distributive equity) by both the developed and developing countries; consequently, they framed their discussion as international equity. In the Philippines, on the other hand, domestic CSO actors were more concerned about the distribution of REDD+ costs and benefits at the domestic level. Similarly, the national actors in Vietnam framed their discussion on equity in REDD+ at the grassroots level and linked it to the livelihood issues of grassroots stakeholders. Domestic CSO actors raised concerns over equity issues linked to tenure arrangements and indigenous rights; they called for the recognition of local rights, along with the need for increased participation of local communities in REDD+ design and implementation.

Source: Di Gregorio, M., Brockaus, M., Cronin, T., Muharrom, E., Santoso, L., Mardian, S. and Bündenbender, M. 2013. Equity and REDD+ in media: a comparative analysis of policy discourse. Ecology and Society, 18(2).

Q5

How does lack of equity increase the vulnerability of grassroots stakeholders to forest-based climate change mitigation?

Many organizations and governments involved with REDD+ perceive that this mechanism has the potential to benefit local communities in a number of ways, in addition to its primary function of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and thus mitigating the impacts of climate change.

REDD+ is also seen as a mechanism which, if implemented properly, can help to improve equity in forest governance at both national and local levels. Conversely, the absence of or limited consideration of the key dimensions of equity in REDD+ implementation will weaken its chances of success and further isolate poor and marginal communities. Powerful and elite groups are more likely to capture forest land and other resources as well as the potential benefits from REDD+, if there is no genuine representation or active participation of all concerned stakeholders. Such circumstances will continue the marginalization and impoverishment of particular communities; the vulnerability of women, ethnic groups and landless households is likely to worsen if they are poorly represented in the decision-making processes. Adequate representation and active participation are critical in light of the persistent discriminatory practices against ownership of land and land-use rights for such groups. Furthermore, the lack of access to forest resources, information, market mechanisms and financial credit for such groups, as well as poor skills to effectively voice their concerns in decision-making processes add to their vulnerability.

In other words, if the fundamental dimensions of equity (distributive, procedural and contextual) are not mainstreamed into decision-making processes pertaining to forests, climate change and REDD+, the vulnerability of grassroots communities is more than likely to worsen.



Section 3: Policy instruments and related challenges to promoting equity in forest-based climate change mitigation at grassroots level

Q6

Which policy instruments and frameworks exist at the international level to promote equity in forests, climate change and REDD+?

Equity can be applied across communities and nations and across generations. The concept of equity is well integrated in international laws. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that the “recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world” (Weiss, 1990)⁵.

With specific reference to equity in REDD+, the 15th Conference of Parties (COP 15) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) held in Copenhagen in 2009, reached a consensus among parties to develop a set of precautionary measures to prevent social and/or environmental damage or harm to forest-dependent communities and increase the benefits for them in an equitable manner. This consensus was then developed into an agreement during COP 16 in Cancun and named the Cancun Agreement. As mentioned earlier, the Agreement covers all three key dimensions of equity. Appendix 1 of the Agreement lists guidance and safeguards for policy approaches and positive incentives on issues relating to REDD+ (see box 3); specifically, respect for the knowledge and rights of indigenous peoples and members of local communities, as well as the full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders, in particular indigenous people and local communities, are critical to advance equity in forests, climate change and REDD+.

The United Nations Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), adopted in 2007, recognizes the rights of indigenous peoples on a wide range of issues and provides a universal framework for the international community. This specifically includes the principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). The Cancun Agreement also refers to compliance with UNDRIP, particularly in recognizing the value of the knowledge and rights of indigenous peoples and other local communities in order to promote equity in REDD+.

⁵Weiss, E.B., 1990. Our rights and obligations to future generations for the environment. *American Journal of International Law*, 84: pp. 198-207. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2203020>



Box 3: UNFCCC safeguards – Cancun Agreement

Parties to the UNFCCC agreed to a set of seven safeguards for REDD+ at the 16th Conference of Parties (COP 16) in Cancun, referred to as ‘Cancun Safeguards’. These safeguards are derived from the recognition of social and environmental risks associated with REDD+ and the importance of multiple benefits for diverse local communities. According to the Cancun Safeguards, when undertaking REDD+ activities the following safeguards should be promoted and supported:

1. The REDD+ actions must complement or consistent with the objectives of national forest programs and relevant international conventions and agreements;
2. National forest governance structures must be transparent and effective, taking into account national legislation and sovereignty;
3. Respect for 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 UNDRIP;
4. The full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders, in particular indigenous peoples and local communities, in REDD+ actions;
5. That REDD+ actions are consistent with the conservation of natural forests and biological diversity, ensuring that REDD+ 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 benefits;
6. Actions to address the risk of reversals;
7. Actions to reduce the displacement of emissions.

Source: <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2010/cop16/eng/07a01.pdf>



Following the Cancun Agreement, a number of initiatives by various multilateral and bilateral agencies have further developed social and environmental safeguards, guidelines and standards, as listed below. These are voluntary guidelines, which can be adapted or adopted by countries in their own contexts. Most of these initiatives refer to various elements of equity, including FPIC, respect for the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, national sovereignty, equitable benefit sharing, full and effective participation, access to information, and empowerment of marginal groups, including women and their participation in carbon projects and compliance to UNDRIP. These initiatives include:

- Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA) developed by the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (www.forestcarbonpartnership.org/)
- Social and Environmental Principles Framework for REDD+ developed by UN-REDD (www.un-redd.org)
- Social and Environmental Standards (SES) for REDD+ by the Climate, Community and Biodiversity Alliance (CCBA) (www.redd-standards.org/)
- Social and Environmental Safeguards for REDD+ by the Rainforest Alliance (www.rainforest-alliance.org/publications/redd-safeguards-guide)
- Women's Carbon Standard by Women Organizing Change in Agriculture and Natural Resources (WOCAN) (www.womenscarbon.org).

Q7

What are the key challenges to ensuring equity in forest-based climate change mitigation at grassroots level?

Ensuring and improving equity in forest-based climate change mitigation, particularly at the grassroots level, is a challenging task. It primarily emerges from the context in which equity is defined. As equity has a social context, it is defined differently in different contexts and cultures. Accordingly, the concept of fairness in climate change and the REDD+ mechanism also varies in different situations and cultures. This implies that to promote equity as a prerequisite, it is important to understand the socio-cultural and biophysical contexts; in order to frame a common understanding and an applicable form of equity it is necessary to analyse who is involved in determining what is fair or unjust, and the methods used to determine fairness.

Power dynamics and power relationships at the local level are other factors that influence equity. The dynamics of power relations affect participatory processes and the equitable sharing and distribution of resources and benefits. Issues such as elite capture of natural resources as well as discriminatory practices with regard to the distribution of costs and benefits from natural resource use may emerge from power relationships.

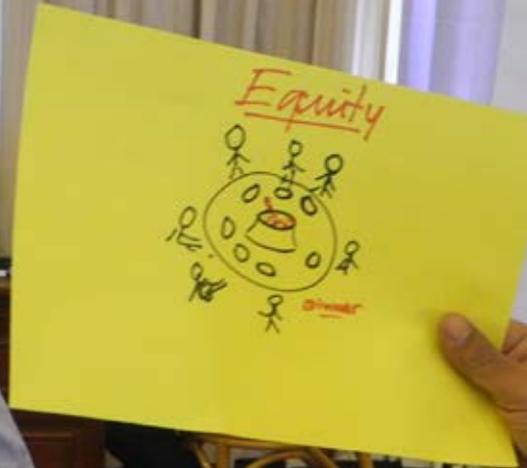
Another important challenge to improving equity in climate change and the REDD+ mechanism is related to security of land rights and tenure. Unclear land tenure systems, and rights and responsibilities for REDD+ among land rights holders at different levels, may lead to wrongful acquisition of the traditional rights of indigenous peoples and local communities. In such a situation, it becomes crucial to rightfully define access to carbon and non-carbon benefits from REDD+. Lack of clarity on access and ownership to carbon and non-carbon benefits and land will generate injustice across different levels of stakeholders, and in particular, people without recognized rights to resources will likely be excluded from any decision-making process vis-à-vis benefits from REDD+.

Designing a mechanism for the distribution of costs and benefits from REDD+ is another challenge. In view of persistent uncertainty over REDD+ benefits, indigenous peoples and other forest-dependent communities who have historically been responsible for the conservation and sustainable use of forest and other carbon-rich ecosystems, will have few or no incentives to contribute to emission reductions.



Inadequate representation of grassroots stakeholders in international negotiations on climate change and REDD+ issues is another major barrier. This has been mainly due to a poor understanding of climate change and REDD+ issues among grassroots stakeholders and their representatives, and therefore low capacity to effectively articulate and voice their problems and concerns to policy-makers and other key decision-makers at various levels. Furthermore, the lack of access to information on climate change and REDD+, particularly in local languages, has greatly restricted meaningful participation of grassroots stakeholders in decision-making processes. Due to these limitations, there is a risk that the outcomes may not favor grassroots stakeholders, adding to their vulnerability to manipulation or deprivation by REDD+ project proponents.

In the socio-cultural context, it is important to recognize the wealth and value of traditional knowledge among indigenous peoples and other forest-dependent communities, particularly when designing interventions for climate change and REDD+ impacts. As the current debate on REDD+ equity encompasses issues related to indigenous peoples and local communities, there is a need to recognize and learn from local knowledge and practices. Unfortunately, it has not (yet) received much attention in the REDD+ discourse, and therefore is likely to increase the risk of failure for REDD+.



Section 4: Capacity development
for improving equity at grassroots
level

Q8

What is the role of grassroots facilitators in improving equity in climate change and REDD+?

Participatory engagement is a process that harnesses human diversity and focuses on building energy through emotion, connection and dialogue as conduits towards individual and collective action on issues of mutual concern.

Bearing in mind the definition of engagement given above, a grassroots facilitator will need to play different roles in addressing the key barriers and challenges, and facilitating grassroots stakeholders' engagement to improve equity in climate change and REDD+ agenda. Some of the key roles a grassroots facilitator can play to promote equity include:

- **Community organizer** – assisting community preparedness, including facilitation and agenda setting of under-represented groups;
- **Process designer and guide** – designing short and long term engagement processes; setting objectives clearly and ensuring that each step of a process is linked to other steps with clearly explained logical linkages between and across the steps;
- **Confidence builder** – assisting/empowering the weaker stakeholders in building confidence to express their voice on issues they deem important;
- **Information provider/explainer** – keeping up to date with the most recent developments, standards and information on climate change and REDD+ and being able to explain these in a simple way without imposing personal ideas that may influence the perceptions of stakeholders;
- **Connector/networker** – being able to sense patterns and connections between groups and issues and confidently reaching out to help when needed;
- **Honest broker** – linking communities and product suppliers to fair and transparent markets and decision-making processes;



- **Space creator** – for distilling opinions and imparting views; someone resourceful, who can find the opportunities to bring the less heard voices into public decision-making;
- **Documenter** – being able to efficiently document perspectives without changing the original meaning and sharing them with others;
- **Gender equality leader** – being able to demonstrate leadership in challenging gender-power differentials and norms; enabling men and women to have equal and meaningful participation in decision-making and fair benefit sharing;
- **Multi-stakeholder dialogue promoter** – creating opportunities and using techniques to encourage dialogue between different stakeholders and reach a mutual understanding of group perspectives;
- **Promoter** – ensuring and advocating local indigenous peoples' and forest-dependent communities' involvement in REDD+ decision-making where needed.



While playing one or more of these roles, one of the most important and fundamental considerations that grassroots facilitators need to consider is to be content neutral in promoting equity. This means that the facilitators themselves do not make any decision or take any position – the stakeholders’ group that she/he is working with will determine what represents equity for them and how it will apply in their own socio-cultural and biophysical contexts. With regard to promoting procedural equity, it is important for grassroots facilitators to consider and recognize different marginalized groups, and ensure that they are able to voice their concerns and interests effectively, by encouraging their active participation. Linked to this is the contextual aspect of equity, which needs to identify the often marginalized groups and ensure that their interests are incorporated into planning and implementation of REDD+ projects by developing their capacity and enhancing their access and control over carbon and non-carbon benefits of REDD+.

Q9

What are the key criteria and indicators for monitoring equity in forests, climate change and REDD+?

In order to ensure the effective integration of the fundamental principles and values of equity in forests, climate change and REDD+, there is a need to monitor the three dimensions of equity. A brief list of key criteria and indicators that may help in monitoring equity is provided below:

Distributive equity – the key elements of distributive equity include costs, risks and benefits being equally and fairly distributed among stakeholders. The following checklist outlines key elements of distributive equity and corresponding qualitative and quantitative data that need to be collected in order to monitor the implementation and effectiveness of distributive equity in REDD+:

Key Issues	Type of information/data to be collected for monitoring
Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Type of costs – monetary and in-kind contribution from local stakeholders through physical labour for various forest management activities such as patrolling, plantation, silvicultural practices, etc;• Distribution of the share of such costs – who has to pay or contribute how much money or time for forest management activities and when.
Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Restricted access to forest resources, livelihood challenges, potential exclusion of certain groups from decision-making and benefit-sharing processes, unrealistic expectations from the local stakeholder and costs outweighing benefits.
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monetary and other kinds of benefits from forests, such as cash income (individual payouts and/or used for community projects) from carbon and non-carbon resources from forests, improved access to these benefits, alternate income-generating activities, enhanced participation of women and marginal groups of communities in REDD+;• Stories of change and other documented evidence in relation to rights and benefits.

Procedural equity considers whether key stakeholders and rights holders have the opportunity to effectively participate and voice their concerns in decision-making processes. The following checklist suggests key the indicators and corresponding data to measure the indicators to monitor procedural equity:

Key Issues	Type of information/data to be collected for monitoring
Composition of key stakeholders and local-level decision-making bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of key stakeholders; • Women, ethnic group members and other often marginalized people are included in the decision-making body; • Procedures for election/selection of the members of decision-making bodies; • Identification of key issues of equity and incentives or barriers to participation for each group.
Decision-making process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By-laws and rules and regulations in place by the local decision-making body for forest management and resource harvesting practices; • Knowledge and practice of using FPIC for participatory decision-making; • By-laws and rules and regulations for promoting gender mainstreaming and social inclusion in decision-making, access to forest resources and benefit-sharing mechanisms; • Frequency of meetings (how many meetings in a month or year) being organized by the decision-making body, and minutes are recorded ; • Plans for following up on the decisions of previous meetings; • Grievance mechanism in place and local community awareness of it.
Transparency and access to information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to information regarding forest management including information on drivers of deforestation and degradation, financial transactions for forest management activities, sources and expenditure of funds and benefit-sharing mechanisms, if any, is in place; • Information about risks, challenges and opportunity costs of REDD+; • Existence of other multi-stakeholder forums in and around local communities that can take part in promoting equity in REDD+; • Knowledge about other forest land-based developmental projects/activities which might have an impact on designing and implementing REDD+ projects.

Contextual equity refers to whether existing conditions, capacity and environment are conducive to supporting distributive and procedural equity. Accordingly, as a basic step, it is important to be aware of the policies, institutions and processes⁵ that exist pertaining to the access to resources, and the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders in managing forest resources, in particular for REDD+. In accordance with this context for monitoring contextual equity, the following key parameters could to be monitored:

Key Issues	Type of information/data to be collected for monitoring
Existing context of local forest management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing forest management institutions, i.e. who makes decisions on forest management currently and why them and how do they do it? • Barriers to inclusion, i.e. what underlies any differences in any of these 'rights', 'access' or 'restrictions', i.e. ethnicity, gender, caste, education and literacy, age, profession, location, family status, religion, sexuality, etc. How do these affect different groups equity issues? • Current conflict issue related to the use of forest land and resources.
REDD+ capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of awareness and status of knowledge among the key decision-makers and other community members with regard to the policies and laws related to access to and management of forest resources; • Current state of knowledge on forest management, climate change and REDD+ among different socio-economic groups of the local community, including women and ethnic groups, and related policies and plans. • Capacity development programs attended by local-level decision-makers and other community members on forest management, climate change impacts and REDD+; • Culture of sharing and learning among community groups, such as during their regular meetings; providing additional time for information sharing by trained persons to others unfamiliar with the subject.

⁵ An organization, establishment, foundation, society, or the like, devoted to the promotion of a particular cause or program, especially one of a public, educational, or charitable character



Q10

What is the role of RECOFTC in improving equity in forest-based climate change mitigation?

RECOFTC – The Center for People and Forests recognizes and follows the principles of a rights-based approach – a framework that integrates the norms, principles, standards and goals of the international human rights system into the plans and processes of development. With its core focus on capacity development, RECOFTC has developed relevant research and training materials, and delivered training programs on the concept and principles of social equity in forest-based climate change mitigation. In particular, two regional initiatives have been instrumental in promoting the concept of social equity in climate change mitigation – the NORAD-funded REDD+ Grassroots Project and the USAID-funded GREEN Mekong Program. Both these initiatives complement each other in terms of geography, approaches and target audiences. Three Mekong countries (Lao PDR, Myanmar and Vietnam) are common to both initiatives; in addition, the REDD+ Grassroots Project targets Indonesia and Nepal and the GREEN Mekong Program targets Cambodia and Thailand. Both initiatives adopt a mutually complementary cascading approach for implementation, with the REDD+ Grassroots Project focusing on grassroots to provincial levels, and the GREEN Mekong Program focusing on the provincial to the regional levels.

With regard to the target audience, provincial government officials and CSOs working with grassroots stakeholders are primary target audiences for the GREEN Mekong Program, while the REDD+ Grassroots Project addresses forest-dependent communities, local-level government and non-government organizations, particularly women, ethnic groups, journalists, teachers, students and youth groups. Awareness raising, training and capacity development activities at the local level are the focus of the REDD+ Grassroots Project. The GREEN Mekong Program concentrates these activities at national and regional levels, in association with ongoing policy development of regional bodies such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). This holistic approach not only helps in developing the capacity of a broad base of grassroots stakeholders (through the REDD+ Grassroots Project), but also provides a crucial link between grassroots stakeholders and policy-makers and implementers at national and regional levels (through the GREEN Mekong Program); thus it creates synergy for promoting the principles of social equity in forests, climate change and REDD+ contexts, in the Asia-Pacific region.



Prior to the development of this Q&A handbook, both projects jointly developed a training manual on *Improving grassroots equity in the forests and climate change context*; the short and simple explanations of the key aspects of equity in the context of forests, climate change and REDD+ provided in this handbook are an ideal complement to the training manual: <http://www.recoftc.org/training-manuals-and-guides/improving-grassroots-equity-forests-and-climate-change-context-training>

For more information on equity, visit:

- grassroots equity portal: <http://www.recoftc.org/project/green-mekong/project/grassroots-equity-portal>
- gender equity video: <http://www.recoftc.org/project/green-mekong/videos/video-what-gender-equity>
- gender equity booklet: <http://www.recoftc.org/project/grassroots-capacity-building-redd/q-and/gender-redd-qa-handbook>
- GREEN Mekong Program: <http://www.recoftc.org/project/green-mekong>
- REDD+ Grassroots Project: <http://www.recoftc.org/project/grassroots-capacity-building-redd>





**THE CENTER FOR
PEOPLE AND FORESTS**

RECOFTC's mission is to enhance capacities for stronger rights, improved governance and fairer benefits for local people in sustainable forested landscapes in the Asia and the Pacific region.

RECOFTC holds a unique and important place in the world of forestry. It is the only international not-for-profit organization that specializes in capacity development for community forestry. RECOFTC engages in strategic networks and effective partnerships with governments, nongovernmental organizations, civil society, the private sector, local people and research and educational institutes throughout the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. With over 25 years of international experience and a dynamic approach to capacity building – involving research and analysis, demonstration sites and training products – RECOFTC delivers innovative solutions for people and forests.

RECOFTC – The Center for People and Forests
P.O. Box 1111
Kasetsart Post Office
Bangkok 10903, Thailand
Tel (66-2) 940-5700
Fax (66-2) 561-4880
info@recoftc.org
www.recoftc.org



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