

# **REDD+ in Mexico: linchpin of environmentally and socially sustainable rural development?**

Salla Rantala<sup>1</sup>, Margaret Skutsch<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Eastern Finland and University of Helsinki, Finland, [salla.rantala@helsinki.fi](mailto:salla.rantala@helsinki.fi),

<sup>2</sup>National University of Mexico, Morelia, Mexico

Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) is a climate change mitigation mechanism based on the maintenance and enhancement of carbon stocks in tropical forests, trees and soil. Despite increasing awareness that the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation often emanate from outside the forest sector, and a growing attention to landscape-based approaches, in many countries REDD+ is still tightly associated with forestry. REDD+ is seen with potential to accrue new resources to frequently under-funded, on-going efforts of forest conservation.

In Mexico, however, REDD+ is envisioned to bring together a much broader set of environmental and social development goals. The draft national REDD+ strategy defines REDD+ not as an isolated policy instrument, but an articulation of policies, programmes, measures and actions in those sectors of governance and economy that influence sustainable rural development. While national level accounting of reduced emissions is required, the autonomy of regions and states within the Mexican federation in defining their appropriate REDD+ actions is emphasized. As such, the central framework for REDD+ planning and implementation in Mexico is that of multilevel governance, requiring effective vertical as well as horizontal integration between various jurisdictional levels, sectors and actors.

This study scrutinizes the effectiveness and equity aspects of national REDD+ strategy development in Mexico within the multilevel governance framework. Through an examination of the integration of REDD+ processes at the national, regional and local levels, we ask how distinct interests are reflected in the 'REDD+ policy mix' and with what implications for environmental effectiveness and social equity. The study draws from qualitative and quantitative data collected through interviews of REDD+ policy actors at the national, regional and local levels, as well as secondary material, such as policy and project documents and reports related to the REDD+ processes. In the analysis, we focus on the structures and relations shaping the procedural equity and legitimacy of the multilevel, multi-actor REDD+ planning and negotiation processes, which are in turn expected to influence the eventual effectiveness of the policy mix. The study highlights the challenges and opportunities for achieving effective articulation of policies and actions under the REDD+ umbrella in the

Mexican context, while making linkages to wider debates and drawing conclusions for other contexts.