

# Gendering climate initiatives

## REDD+ impacts on perceived well-being

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### Key messages

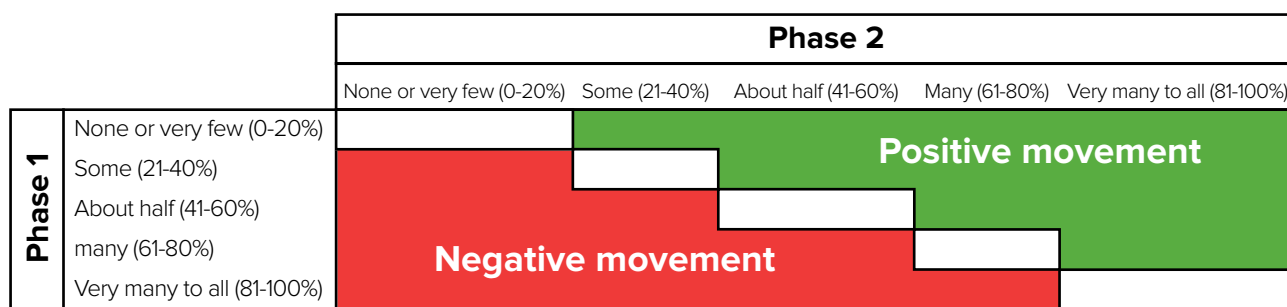
- ▶ Women in villages with REDD+ initiatives are more likely to experience a decline in their perceived well-being.
- ▶ This result is likely influenced by a failure of REDD+ initiatives to effectively address gender in design and implementation.
- ▶ Incorporating gender considerations into REDD+ planning and implementation is critical to: (1) avoid exacerbating gender inequalities; and (2) enhance women's well-being.

### Introduction

This brief presents results and recommendations based on work carried out by CIFOR's Global Comparative Study on REDD+ on the gendered impact of the implementation of 16 REDD+ initiatives across six countries: Brazil, Cameroon, Indonesia, Peru, Tanzania and Vietnam. Research reveals that women living in villages with REDD+ initiatives perceived a decline in their overall well-being, compared to a control group from villages without REDD+ initiatives (Larson et al. 2018). This result is likely due, at least partly, to an ineffective consideration of gender in the design and implementation of such initiatives. Gender 'neutral' approaches may reinforce and exacerbate existing gender-based inequalities.

### Methods

Applying a before-after-control-intervention (BACI) approach, focus groups were carried out in 62 REDD+ villages and 61 control villages for comparison. Phase 1 (2010–11) was conducted before or very early in the implementation of each REDD+ initiative, and phase 2 after 3 years of the initiative (2013–14). In each village, focus group discussions were held with mixed participants (68% male on average) and with women only. Discussions aimed to understand how well-being is defined locally, how it changed for the village, or for the women in the village, and what factors drove changes in perceived well-being.



**Figure 1. Matrix used to calculate movement in well-being by village between Phase 1 and Phase 2.**

The method was designed to group villagers (or just women) by percentages experiencing positive, negative, or no change in wellbeing in the previous two years. Shifts in wellbeing are defined as changes in the proportion reporting improvement between the two phases; each village is classified accordingly, as in Figure 1 (please see Larson et al. 2018 for the full explanation of this method). The BACI approach allows us to attribute differences between the REDD+ and control villages to the REDD+ initiative.

We also wanted to understand the REDD+ initiatives more specifically. In REDD+ villages, each initiative is made up of multiple interventions. The types of intervention included: restrictions on forest access or conversion; non-conditional livelihood enhancements; conditional livelihood enhancements; forest enhancement; environmental education; and tenure clarification. Women in REDD+ villages were asked to rate the well-being effect of each intervention as positive, neutral or negative.

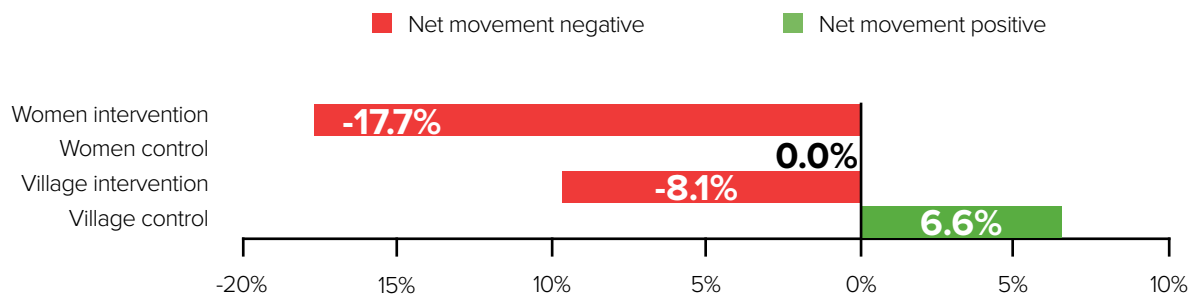
### Findings

*How well-being was defined.* Overall, access to good health, education, sufficient food to eat, and having a well-constructed house were among the top five characteristics identified for positive well-being in both village and women’s focus

groups. Importantly, 43% of the women’s groups specifically mentioned having their own source of income as central to women’s well-being (the fifth most common response across the women’s focus groups). Other factors women reported more than the mixed groups included family and community unity, and having a husband who provides for the family.

*How well-being changed over time.* The study demonstrates that more villages with REDD+ interventions than control villages showed a ‘negative movement’, or a net decrease in perceived well-being between the two phases. This decrease was found in both village and women’s focus groups, but it was more pronounced for women’s groups. Figure 2 shows these results. For REDD+ villages, 17.7% more showed net declines compared to those with improvements in women’s well-being; in control villages, an equal number showed improvements and declines (0%). 8.1% more REDD+ villages showed declines in village well-being, whereas 6.6% more control villages showed improvements than declines. The results suggest that perceived well-being was more likely to decline over time in REDD+ villages in comparison to control sites.

*What accounts for well-being change over time.* A regression analysis on the phase 2 well-being data showed that living in a



**Figure 2. Wellbeing change by net percent of villages.**

REDD+ site was significantly associated with declines in women's perceived well-being in intervention villages (not significant for the village groups). At the same time, it seems unlikely that REDD+ would have had such a notable impact in only 3 years. Unrealized expectations may explain some of this, as well as the many specific and varied factors that affect overall well-being (such as illness). When women rated specific interventions in REDD+ villages, 46% were seen to have a positive effect (and only 7%, negative). Nevertheless, women specifically reported that well-being improvements were associated with REDD+ in only two villages; these two villages also demonstrated overall well-being improvements between the two phases of research.

What can we learn from these villages? In one, the initiative is credited with supporting seven different specific interventions, more than twice the other villages in the same site; women said six of these initiatives had positive effects for women, with an emphasis on direct payments received for women's labor and enhanced security of livelihood assets. Overall, the analysis of women's responses – regarding interventions and definitions of well-being – suggests that well-being is more likely to improve if interventions support women's employment, economic conditions and empowerment.

In conclusion, research results suggest that perceived well-being has important gendered dimensions and impacts that the REDD+ initiatives under study have generally failed to address in their design and implementation (see also Larson et al., 2015). As noted in the literature, REDD+ and similar initiatives need greater commitment to a gendered approach. This would involve incorporating gender concerns from the planning stages in more substantive ways. Villages should not be approached with preset notions of gender roles and interests, and 'gender' should not solely mean calling for women's participation without considering underlying inequities that might limit meaningful participation. The variety of outcomes found in this research calls for site-level reflection and analysis that allow for the design and implementation of initiatives in ways that adapt to each specific context.

## Recommendations

- To have a positive impact on well-being, REDD+ and other climate interventions in forest communities must include women in planning, implementation and benefit distribution.
- A clear understanding of gender dynamics and inequalities – likely to vary among villages – must be developed early in the initiative and strategically addressed throughout.
- Acknowledging women's priorities can inform interventions to better address inequalities, empower local women, and ensure their access to resources, rights and REDD+ benefits.

## References

Larson AM, Dokken T, Duchelle A, Atmadja S, Resosudarmo IAP, Cronkleton P, Cromberg M, Sunderlin W, Awono A and Selaya G. 2015. The role of women in early REDD+ implementation: Lessons for future engagement. *International Forestry Review* (17): 1.

Larson AM, Solis D, Duchelle A, Atmadja S, Resosudarmo IAP, Dokken T and Komalasari M. 2018. Gender lessons for climate initiatives: A comparative study of REDD+ impacts on subjective well-being. *World Development* 108: 86–102.

### About this brief series: Lessons for gender-responsive landscape restoration

Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) aims to achieve ecological integrity and enhance human well-being in deforested or degraded landscapes. Evidence shows that addressing gender equality and women's rights is critical for addressing this dual objective. Against this backdrop, CIFOR and a number of partners hosted a Global Landscapes Forum workshop on FLR and gender equality in Nairobi, Kenya in November 2017. The objective of the workshop was to identify and discuss experiences, opportunities and challenges to advancing gender-responsive FLR in East African countries, as well as to join together various stakeholders working at the interface of gender and FLR as a community of practice. This brief set is a tangible outcome of this collaboration, featuring a number of useful lessons and recommendations rooted in the experience and expertise of partners in civil society, multilateral organizations, research community and private sector – all working in different ways to enhance the gender-responsiveness of restoration efforts.



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The Global Landscapes Forum (GLF) is a multi-stakeholder platform with a global secretariat led by CIFOR and core funding provided by the Government of Germany. Charter members: Agronomique pour le Développement (CIRAD), Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), Ecoagriculture Partners, Evergreen Agriculture, Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), Global Environment Facility (GEF), Indigenous Peoples Major Group (IPMG), International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), IFOAM - Organics International, International Network for Bamboo and Rattan (INBAR), International Union of Forests Research Organization (IUFRO), Rainforest Alliance, Rare, Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI), United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment), Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation, part of Wageningen Research, World Agroforestry Centre, World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Germany, Youth In Landscapes (YIL), World Bank Group