

Oryx

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Dear *Oryx* reader

On behalf of Fauna & Flora International (FFI) it gives me great pleasure to introduce the latest issue of *Oryx*. In this issue there is a particular focus on the implications of Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD; see pages 330–357).

Agreement on the need to include REDD in a post-2012 climate change framework was one of the few clear outcomes from last December's United Nations Climate Change Conference. The Copenhagen Accord provides an opportunity to integrate emission reductions from forest protection into future regulated systems. However, as with many a great initiative, the devil will be in the detail. REDD remains a controversial proposal, even amongst those committed to forest preservation, and the debate is particularly fierce around how to protect the rights of forest communities.



At FFI we see REDD as an important opportunity not only to reduce carbon emissions but also to increase global recognition of the vital role played by forests, and to enable the inherent value of these ecosystems to be harnessed for their own protection. At the same time we are proceeding with caution. Our experience in habitat conservation means we are well versed in the difficult realities of protecting tracts of tropical forest habitat.

In particular, FFI knows at first hand the importance of national and local governance processes in securing effective forest management over the long-term, experience we are bringing to bear within our own REDD projects in Indonesia and Liberia. On related matters, in this issue Burgess et al. (pp. 339–351) identify local governance as a key issue in developing REDD+ in Tanzania, and Sandbrook et al. (pp. 330–334) raise concerns that REDD may promote centralized, rather than participatory, methods of forest management. In this context one approach FFI is exploring in relation to REDD is the development of community carbon pools. These bring together communities who own small forest areas but that individually are too small to be cost effective as REDD projects.

Another factor identified in these articles on REDD, and one that resonates with FFI's experience of protecting habitats and improving local livelihoods, is the interplay between REDD and land rights and tenure (also another focus for Sandbrook et al.). Areas under greatest threat are often those with the weakest tenure arrangements, making both protection and benefit-sharing agreements difficult to implement. In some situations there may be a case for focusing instead on areas with some form of legal protection but where current resources are failing to stop ongoing deforestation or degradation. On a related matter, Scharlemann et al. (pp. 352–357) review the potential to use REDD within protected areas.

These three articles and FFI's own experience suggest that REDD will play out as a balancing act between the highest gains (in terms of forest threat), local realities (particularly in terms of land tenure) and the need to involve local communities in forest management. As for the devil in the detail only time, political will and a lot of effort will enable REDD to meet its inherent potential both in terms of forest protection and global reductions in emissions.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Entwistle'.

Dr Abigail Entwistle
Director of Science
Fauna & Flora International





Online Oryx

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'Your support is much appreciated and comes as a breath of fresh air in this highly tensed academic atmosphere.'

— Malika Virah-Sawmy, conservationist in Madagascar and *Oryx* author

'I have read the July issue from cover to cover and find it really informative for my MSc in Wildlife Management and Conservation.'

— Kenny Armstrong, student

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