



Three cheap ways of reducing forest carbon emissions in tropical Asia

A recent paper identifies three cost-effective ways to reduce carbon emissions from forest loss in tropical Asia

Topic: Environmental law, governance & policy (Session title)

Title of research or talk: Three cheap ways of reducing forest carbon emissions in tropical Asia

In a new paper published in *Environmental Research Letters* researchers examined the financial competitiveness of strategies available through the REDD+ scheme.

The goal of the United Nations-backed initiative known as REDD+ (for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation, plus conserving and sustainably managing forests and enhancing forest carbon stocks) is to provide the monetary incentives needed to lower carbon emissions from forest loss by linking financial payments with carbon stored in trees.

The purpose of the research was to draw attention to the most cost-effective use of REDD+ resources to reduce emissions, using cost-benefit analysis.

The study found that financing improved management of protected areas, which reduces emissions from illegal deforestation and supports biodiversity conservation, was highly cost-effective. On average US\$13 could reduce 1 tonne of carbon emissions. The new finance contributed to hiring additional park staff and training programs to prevent illegal logging and agricultural encroachment.

Another cost-effective opportunity for REDD+ was removing carbon from the atmosphere through tropical reforestation, costing on average US\$9 per tonne of carbon. Further, the scope for reforestation is vast, with millions of hectares of degraded land in Indonesia. The fact that these cost-effective opportunities for lowering forest carbon emissions even exist is extremely promising and must be better recognised.

An important distinction of REDD+ is that it aims to implement cost-effective and sustainable mitigation activities that promote the long-term, healthy management of forests, carefully planning how to use land. For example, REDD+ promotes the sustainable harvesting of timber in logging concessions, as timber provides vital income for local communities. However, the carbon benefit comes from enforcing sustainable logging techniques, to reduce wastage and residual damage during log-harvesting. This was found to be another cost-effective opportunity for REDD+.

The key take-home message of this is that cost-efficient opportunities for reducing emissions in Southeast Asia exist, but activities could be further expanded with additional political and financial support in recognition of the multitude of benefits attainable for both developing and developed countries.

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