The Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation mechanism aims to create financial incentives for forest conservation in developing countries. REDD+ has two main objectives: cutting greenhouse gas emissions by reducing deforestation and providing alternative income sources for marginalized rural areas in the Global South. Moreover, REDD+ may serve as an offsetting mechanism for greenhouse gases emitted in the Global North.

Problems:
Competing and ambiguous land tenure in many tropical frontier areas makes forest carbon offsetting a rather risky approach for mitigating climate change, especially if different actors lay claim to the very same piece of forest. One such actor may be the state who has received REDD+ payments from an industrialized country for offsetting emissions, and another may be a local forest owner who has sold the very same piece of forest to an oil palm company.

Consequence:
Instead of cutting emissions, forest carbon offsetting could give rise to additional greenhouse gas emissions if property rights are not clearly defined. Those actors that have paid forest owner A for offsetting emissions by conserving forests have emitted greenhouse gases. If forest owner B converts the same forest area to an oil palm plantation, the greenhouse gases fixed in the forest are released additionally.

Case study: Indonesia

94,432,000 ha covered by forest

30 Millionen

Indonesians depend on forest products and forest ecosystems

Over 60%

of Indonesia’s emissions are caused by deforestation and changes in land use

Drivers of Deforestation: Expansion of oil palm cultivation, paper production and mining and pulp

Land conflicts:
Only 10% of state forest is gazetted.

369 land conflicts were recorded on 12.8 million ha in 2013.

Outlook

1. A non-offsetting approach to REDD+
Investment in forest conservation is urgently needed in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and conserve biodiversity. As an offsetting mechanism, REDD+ does not reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Land conflicts could even give rise to additional greenhouse gas emissions.

2. Land reforms: Land conflicts should be resolved prior to implementing REDD+ by reforming land and forest tenure. Decision-makers should consider that tenure reforms and tenure formalization create both winners and losers. Successful reforms require strong political coalitions.

3. What are the root causes of land conflicts? When it comes to designing socially inclusive land reforms, it is essential to understand the historical root causes of land conflicts and ambiguous and conflicting land tenure.