

# Survey on REDD Communications Barriers and Needs

## White Paper

Evan Johnson, Tracy Johns, and Danielle Knight  
[ejohnson@ipam.org.br](mailto:ejohnson@ipam.org.br) - [tjohns@ipam.org.br](mailto:tjohns@ipam.org.br) - [dknight@ipam.org.br](mailto:dknight@ipam.org.br)



## Forum on Readiness for REDD

### INTRODUCTION

*The Forum on Readiness for REDD (Forum), with the support of Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation (GBMF), designed and conducted a formal survey of information uses and gaps for REDD stakeholders, to inform Forum efforts to effectively meet stakeholder information needs. The survey was designed to gain an understanding of the flow of information between REDD stakeholders, to identify major barriers to REDD information sharing, and to guide the development of tools for overcoming these barriers.*

*The Forum interviewed 70 individuals identified either as directly working on REDD or as an engaged stakeholder in the REDD readiness process. This white paper reflects the findings of that survey and follow-up conversations with respondents.*

*The majority of participants (63 percent) were from developing countries, and all were involved in REDD policy or implementation activities, having attended at least one international meeting on REDD. Participants were identified through the network of the Forum on Readiness for REDD, and in most cases, the survey was carried out one-on-one either via telephone or in-person. Most participants had a working knowledge of English, and were surveyed in that language. For those who preferred, the survey was also available in written form in Spanish, French and Portuguese.*

### FINDINGS

#### Summary

The survey reveals several key issues and challenges regarding REDD information dissemination and uptake. The majority of respondents expressed that there is too much information on REDD, and that they have difficulty navigating the available resources. Additionally, stakeholders find current information difficult to use because they do not know where to look for specific topics and issues.

Language and technical terminology are barriers to the utility of REDD information among some stakeholder groups, and despite the volume of information available, nearly a quarter of respondents expressed that they do not have enough information on REDD to participate effectively in meetings.

The major sources for information are cited as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and United Nations entities (UN-REDD Programme and UNFCCC). Many organizations

engaged in producing and/or disseminating information on REDD are attempting to reach forest-dwelling communities and indigenous peoples, but report that these are the most difficult stakeholder groups to access, and that they do not have the right tools to do so. Furthermore, there is little flow of information between the private sector and other stakeholder groups engaged in REDD readiness.

## **Major findings**

### Basic Knowledge of REDD

Those already involved in REDD understand the basics. Ninety-four percent of respondents identified themselves as *familiar, very familiar, or having expert knowledge* of the subject as a whole. In response to questions on the types of information respondents were looking for, *basic information* was the least-chosen option. However, respondents from national and sub-national Southern NGOs differ—one-third felt that they did not have enough information to participate effectively in meetings.

### REDD Information Topics

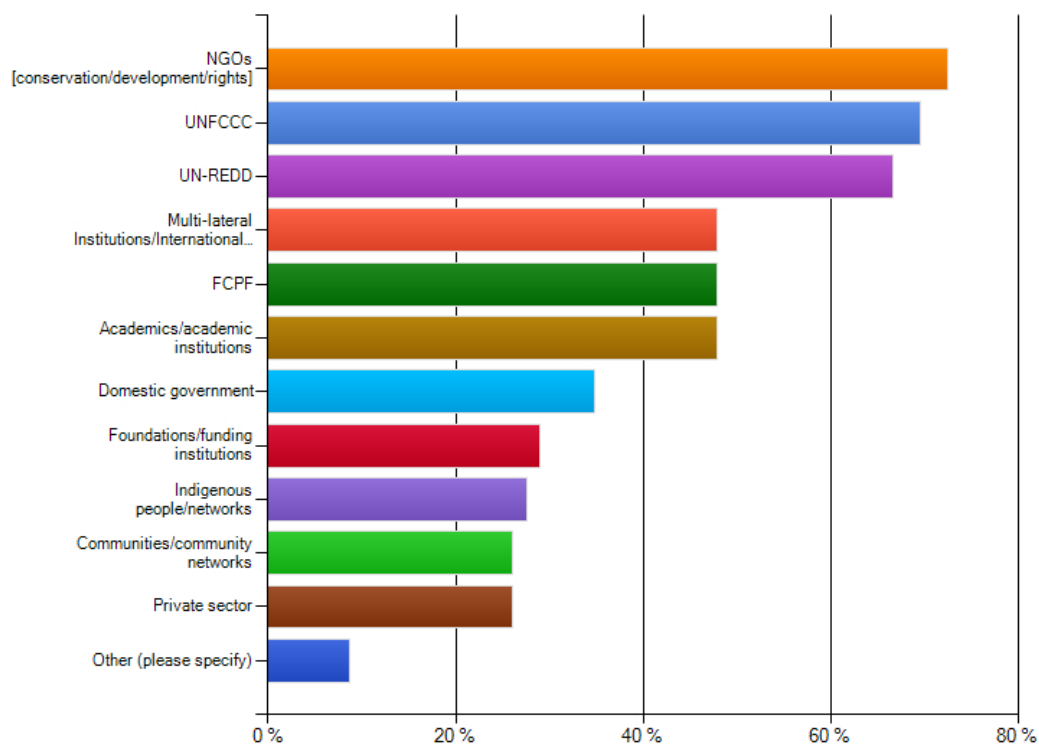
Generally speaking, when individuals seek in-depth information on REDD, it is on a broad range of REDD-related topics, from *technical information*, to *policy*, to *rights and tenure* and others. The survey asked respondents to indicate on which REDD subjects they sought information. When looking across all respondents, within the range of topics covered in the survey, most people chose many subjects from the list, and no single subject stood out as being the most commonly sought. In fact, with the exception of *basic information*, no one subject was chosen by less than 63 percent of respondents. This indicates that those involved in REDD generally seek to develop a broad knowledge of REDD and readiness. In follow-up questioning, respondents identified a need for a wide range of REDD information to be available through a limited number of trusted sources.

Considering specific stakeholder groups, however, some groups have specific types of information that they seek more often than other types. *Implementation* was the most commonly cited information need among all NGO respondents. However, when the responses of Southern-based *national and sub-national NGOs* are analyzed separately from *international NGOs*, their most commonly expressed interest was in capacity building information (73 percent). For respondents from Southern-based *national or sub-national governments*, information on governance was the most frequently selected topic (77 percent).

### Information Sources and Outlets

Non-governmental organizations and the United Nations agencies are the primary sources of REDD Readiness information for respondents, with nearly 75 percent of those surveyed receiving REDD information from *NGOs*, 70 percent the *UNFCCC* and 67 percent from the *UN-REDD Programme*.

**From which groups do you generally find information on REDD? (Choose all that apply)**



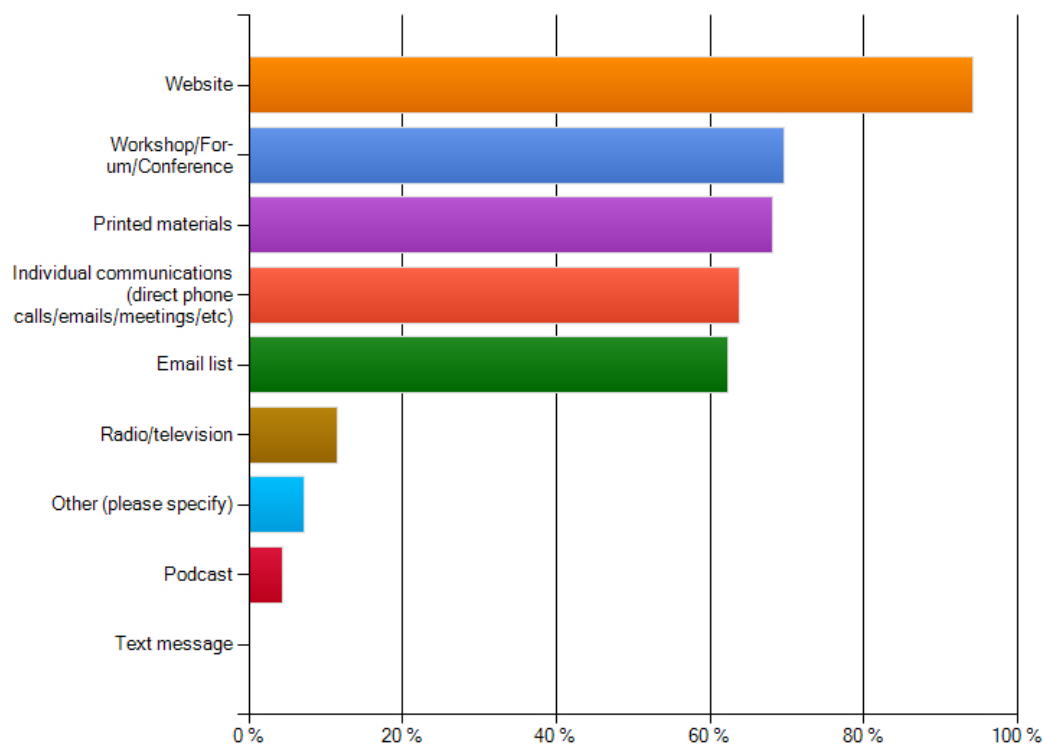
When asked in what formats they find information on REDD, respondents most frequently cited *websites* (94 percent). Following up, respondents were asked to list the top three websites they use to gather REDD information. A total of 39 different websites were cited, and 18 sites were listed by more than one respondent. There are four websites that stand out notably in frequency of use: UNFCCC (27 responses); REDD Monitor (12 responses); World Bank FCPF (11 responses); UN-REDD Programme (11 responses).

Amongst all respondents, *workshops and conferences* are the second most common format for receiving REDD information (70 percent). Specifically amongst Southern-based *national and sub-national NGOs*, *workshops and conferences* are the most common format for information gathering, even beyond websites.

For respondents that distribute information on REDD, *workshops and conferences* are the most common avenue for information outreach, with 85 percent selecting this as a format they use for information distribution, compared to 64 percent for websites and 68 percent for printed materials.

*Radio and video* are not used by most respondents for gathering REDD information; however, amongst Southern-based *national and sub-national government* respondents that distribute information, 57 percent said that they use radio or television. Further, it was expressed in comments that these outlets are useful specifically when working with communities.

### In which formats do you find information on REDD? (Choose all that apply)



### Barriers to Improving REDD Knowledge

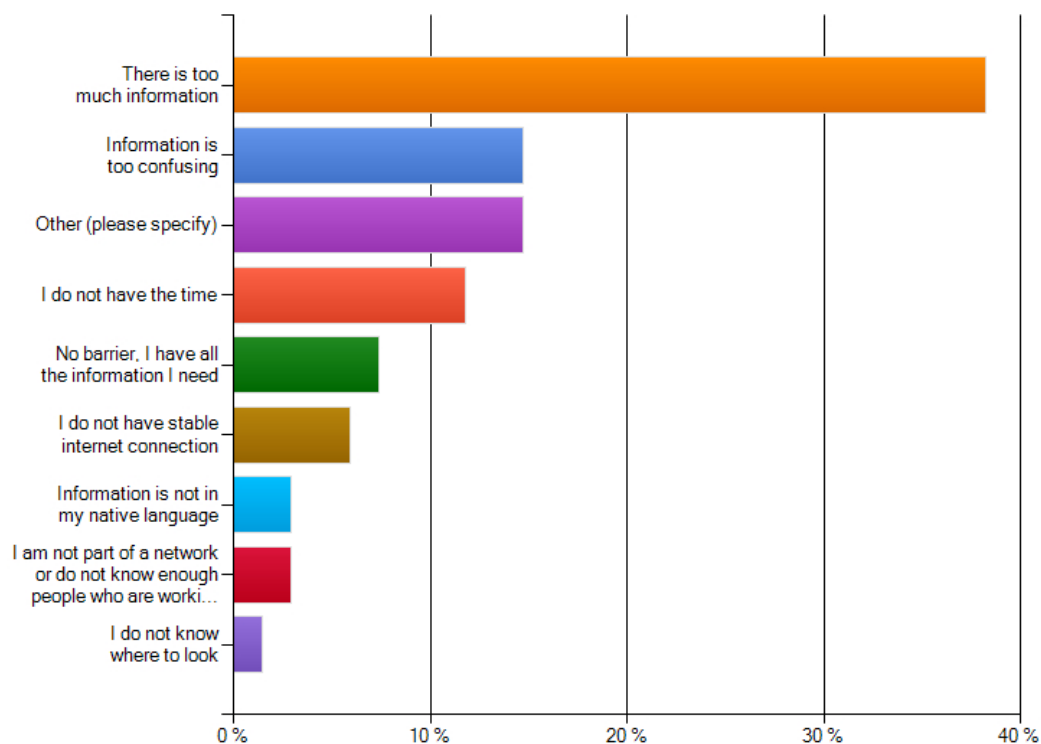
Overall, respondents expressed an *average* level of difficulty in finding the REDD information they need. Except in very specific areas of REDD, a plurality (39 percent) of engaged stakeholders indicated that there is *too much information* to navigate. Most do not believe that there is a lack of information, although a few respondents expressed concern about the lack of availability of information in certain specific areas, such as methodologies and case studies.

While the overwhelming volume of information on REDD is cited as the biggest barrier to improving one's own knowledge, very few respondents (eight percent) feel that they have all the information they need. Respondents indicated that material is not systemized or organized, making it difficult to navigate resources.

The most significant problems with REDD information appear to be in its utility, its organization, and in some cases its perceived level of neutrality. This implies that for those already engaged in REDD, there is enough information available, but it is not organized in a useful way, and it is difficult to find information on specific topics. In the comments section of the survey, a number of respondents also noted concerns about information being used to promote a specific political position on REDD.

Though nearly all respondents speak some English, 54 percent reported that language is at least occasionally a barrier to their use of REDD information. The majority of respondents also cited technical terminology as at least *occasionally* being a barrier—this was particularly true among Southern *national and sub-national NGOs* (87 percent) and *government* stakeholders (70 percent).

### What is the biggest barrier to improving your own knowledge of REDD?

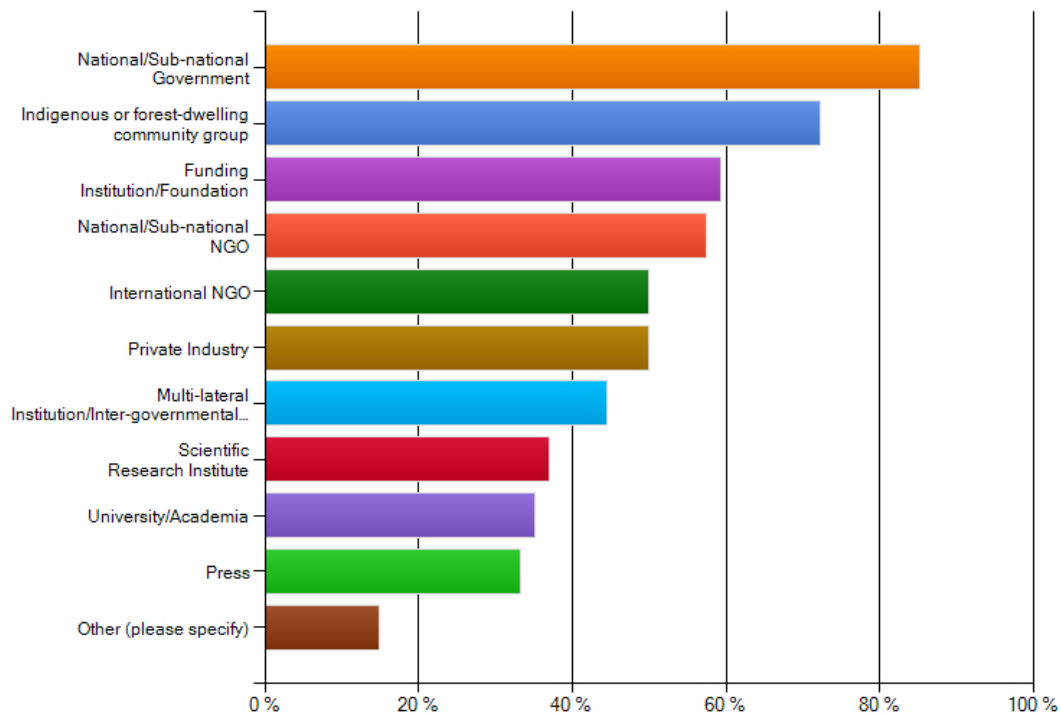


Respondents also expressed a need for REDD-related materials that are free of technical jargon for use in engaging broader constituencies. Internet access is referenced as a barrier by those working with indigenous and forest-dwelling community stakeholders on REDD outreach. The message: avoid technical terminology, and simplify and shorten materials to make them accessible. This need was expressed by communities and indigenous peoples mentioned above, as well as by Southern-based NGOs and government agencies.

#### Underserved Stakeholders

Seventy-eight percent of the NGO participants said that *indigenous or forest-dwelling community groups* are among their target audiences for information sharing, however most reported that those are also the most difficult groups to reach. According to survey comments, this is due in part to the lack of availability of appropriate tools, and lack of experience or specific information on how to effectively engage these groups. There is an expressed need for reliable and neutral tools to introduce indigenous peoples and forest-dwelling communities to the basic subject of REDD, so that they can become engaged in the REDD dialogue. Individuals from *NGOs, national and sub-national governments*, and the *private sector* each emphasized a need for audience-appropriate forms of outreach such as community workshops, visual tools, local radio, songs and theater.

**Which of the groups below are the audiences you are trying to reach? (choose all that apply)**



There is also very little information flowing from either forest-dwelling communities or indigenous peoples out to other stakeholder groups. When asked which stakeholder groups they get information from, relatively few respondents chose *indigenous or forest-dwelling community groups*. Moreover, indigenous representatives included in this survey expressed that communicating with other REDD stakeholder groups, including funding institutions and governments, is a challenge.

There is relatively little exchange of information between the private sector—project developers and investors—and the larger REDD community. The private sector actors generally use websites such as Forest Carbon Portal and Carbon Positive more than they use those websites most commonly cited by other stakeholders. Although the private sector respondents cited NGOs as the most common source for REDD information, only 26 percent of all respondents indicated that they receive information from the private sector. In individual comments, several private sector respondents noted that they need more information on REDD projects, technical information such as methodologies, and updates on what is happening at the national level in REDD countries.

Finally, there is difficulty in the exchange of REDD information between different developing country *national and sub-national governments*. Despite the fact that all of the government respondents that disseminate information cited other governments as one of their audiences, very few of the government respondents (23 percent) receive information from other governments. In the comments to the survey, a small number of respondents noted that learning what other governments are doing in REDD is one of their major challenges.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### *Centralize and Organize Information*

There is great value in having centralized and organized REDD information on the Internet to facilitate the readiness process. Most individuals involved in REDD are generalists, attempting to keep informed of a broad and rapidly evolving field. Having information aggregated and systemized online would likely improve its utility and reach. Although significant members of the broader stakeholder community may not have regular Internet access, many of those currently engaged in REDD do, and can use the Internet to gather information, conduct research and analysis, build networks and distribute information to local communities. Ultimately, improved access to web resources will facilitate the flow of information offline as well.

### *Improve Outreach to Indigenous Peoples and Forest-Dwelling Communities*

A more effective strategy is needed to exchange information with forest-dwelling communities and indigenous peoples. Some tools already exist for this purpose, including the REDD guides for indigenous communities and trainers created by Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP), Forest Peoples Programme (FPP), International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA), The Nature Conservancy (TNC), and Tebtebba. There is a need for more of these tools, and for the existing tools to be made more accessible to trainers and others that wish to exchange information with these stakeholders. Moreover, when working with indigenous peoples and communities, it would increase the value of workshops and meetings to incorporate culturally-relevant teaching methods, including visual tools, videos, interactive sessions, and song, dance and theater. Additionally, it would be useful to employ local radio and television to inform communities about the basic issues, to alert them to events, and to otherwise engage them in the ongoing dialogue.

### *Address Language and Terminology Barriers*

REDD-relevant information can only reach the full range of implementers if it is available in their native language. Materials would be more useful to a greater number of stakeholders if at a minimum, they were translated into the national languages of REDD countries. One respondent suggested that even a simple *translate* button on a website, that uses a web-based translator, would be helpful. In addition, information intended for non-experts should explain technical terminology, acronyms and jargon.

### *Facilitate Information Sharing with Developing-Country Governments*

Planning processes at the national and sub-national government level are moving forward rapidly, and results of the survey show that stakeholders, including other national governments, wish to better understand these processes. It would be useful if there were a central site/process whereby governments could make planning documents public rapidly, and provide updates on their activities.

In conclusion, the key lessons for those seeking to share REDD information can be summed up in the following terms: centralize it, organize it, publicize it, translate it, and explain it.